

**BRANDING STRATEGIES: ANALYZING TV CAMPAIGNS FOR THE  
PROMOTION OF LEBANON AS A TOURISTIC DESTINATION**

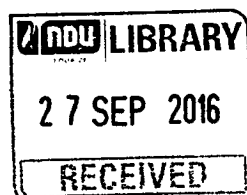
A Thesis  
Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Media Studies/ Advertising

By

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Spring, 2014



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## Abstract

Nations have understood the importance of setting reliable branding strategies to promote themselves as unique touristic destination. Marketers around the world are now dealing with countries as if they are brands and use different kinds of strategies to promote them. This thesis went through the definition of branding and destination branding, it also discussed the branding process with the emphasis on the Lebanese case.

Relying on persuasion theories, mainly Rank's persuasion model, this thesis has analyzed the TV campaigns done by the Ministry of Tourism in Lebanon to determine their strengths and weaknesses and eventually to put guidelines for any future branding strategy for Lebanon.

A sample of 52 Lebanese citizens and 30 tourists aged 18 years and above from both genders filled out a questionnaire to collect data about the effectiveness of the TV campaigns in promoting and branding Lebanon as a touristic destination.

Results showed that television is still an essential tool in promoting countries. The TV campaigns of Lebanon, however, do not reach the required markets and that is due to several obstacles such as budget constraints and the lack of an effective branding strategy. A Conceptual Model of Destination Branding by Cai & Hsu (2009) and another one by Qu, Kim & Im (2011) described the branding process and the image building process. These models could be helpful in evaluating and improving the position of Lebanon as a touristic destination.

Further research should elaborate the different criteria of the branding process. There should be an in-depth analysis of the psychological needs and expectations of the potential tourists. This would facilitate the communication process by knowing how to reach the targeted tourists and what message they should receive.

## I - Introduction

### 1.1 Branding Countries

Countries, known to be tourism destinations, in the branding concept, have tried to promote their images in several ways throughout their history to attract potential tourists and related investments. A strong country brand is the nation's ultimate intangible asset and goes beyond its geographical size, financial performance and levels of awareness among competitors. Branding a destination can be a lasting vehicle for goodwill and for the improvement of the country's lifestyle, financial and political situation and also to boost the value of exports, from people to products to entire corporations only if when managed properly across every measure (FutureBrand, 2010). Some destinations have become popular, or at least well known, around the world, whereas others have remained less familiar, despite the time and money spent on their marketing efforts. This raises questions on the effectiveness of promoting destinations as well as the appropriateness of the tools used to create such promotions.

However, continuously strive to create more favorable images of their own endeavors to compete with all other destinations for a share of the world's wealth and attention. Buhalis (2000, p. 6) states that a destination might at time become the focus of attention for the wrong reasons. When such a situation occurs, the reputation of that destination needs to be changed in order to build on the qualities that are positive, attractive, unique, sustainable and relevant to many different people around the world (Ndlovu, 2009). "A weak country brand, like a weak product brand, leads to poor differentiation, ambiguous meaning and low recall in



the minds of people who travel, invest and do business outside their borders. All of this affects a nation's ability to stand out regionally and globally and to realize future ambitions beyond its natural resources." (FutureBrand, 2010, p. 3)

Nevertheless, research has shown that nations that seek to brand themselves both locally and internationally as good tourist destinations have engaged in a fierce competition to attract more tourists to their destinations (Anholt, 2007). Furthermore the idea of place or nation branding has been a keen interest among developed and developing economies as a result of the impacts of globalisation (Pike, 2008). The need for places to differentiate themselves from each other is to maintain their individuality in pursuit of various competitive objectives whether in the economic, political or social fields. The conscious attempt of governments to shape a specifically planned and designed place identity and promote it to recognized markets, whether external or internal, is not a new subject, on the contrary, it is considered to be almost as old as civic government itself. Thus "any consideration of the fundamental geographical idea of sense of place must include the deliberate creation of such senses through place marketing." (Kavaratzis, 2008)

Tough considered as a key component of development in many countries, and despite its notable economic power and apparent flexibility, tourism is highly vulnerable to internal and external shocks or breakdowns as varied as economic downturns, natural disasters, epidemic disease, and international conflicts (Sonmez, Apostolopoulos, & Tarlow, 1999, p. 1), which forfeits its popularity among tourists. If the image of a tourist destination becomes negative or considered unsafe, it loses its attractiveness for the potential tourists and it can bring the entire tourism industry into jeopardy (Ndlovu, 2009).

Prior to the 15-years civil war that broke out in 1975, Lebanon was a prime tourist destination, and was known internationally as the “Switzerland of the Middle East” (Milich, 2011). Since then, Lebanon’s political imbroglio, security issues and unstable situation have deeply affected tourism; this is clearly shown in the swinging number of tourists visiting it, which will be further discussed throughout the study. However, 38 years after the civil war, and despite the ups and downs that the tourism sector has faced throughout the years, Lebanon has witnessed a remarkable tourism growth and shown by the increase in the number of tourists whenever the security situation gets more stable.

It is not hidden to anyone that the tourism industry in Lebanon has experienced a negative growth in the past few years, and some experts in the private economic sectors have stressed the need for some serious improvements in the tourism industry. Additionally, Minister Abboud noted that the tourism sector is in a stable condition, however, he added that the Ministry of Tourism is unable to promote Lebanon in a proper way, which might jeopardize the image of the country and thus the tourism sector. (Abboud, 2010-2014). Mr. Ibrahim Lahoud, Director of Strategy and Brand Communication, BrandCentral, noted on Emiraes 24/7 (Staff Writer, 2009) website that there are several gaps in the promotion of Lebanon, particularly in the area of tourism wherein a great number of people around the world are still unaware that Lebanon has so much more to offer than its cedar trees. However, the Lebanese Tourism Authorities and despite all the negative realities still insist that the industry is safe and away from all the occurring events happening inside and around Lebanon.

## 1.2 Background and Orientation of the Research Theme

Lebanon lies at the center of the MENA Region and it was as much a cultural melting pot in past centuries as it is today. The country benefits from a rich history, to which a number of archaeological treasures still stand in testament. Many civilizations have flourished in Lebanon throughout the ages and within its tight borders there are numerous historic and cultural attractions. Each civilization has left a permanent mark on the rich combination of culture and heritage in the modern days of Lebanon. (RCPL, 2004, p. 7). UNESCO has listed some of these treasures on its list for the World Heritage Sites and it includes Aanjar, Baalbeck, Byblos, Tyre, Qadisha Valley and Cedars' Forest (ABTA Magazine, 2006).

As a tourist destination, Lebanon has experienced an evolutionary cycle and went from the stage of launching to close-to-maturity level before the 1975 civil war. After that, Lebanon had to recreate itself as a tourist destination all over again, but still didn't get to maturity level due to several factors, which include among other things, lack of a clear marketing and branding strategy, lingering political and religious conflicts and continuous economic problems. Nowadays, people in Lebanon cannot but remember the glorious days of their country, and many agree that, despite the great improvements that were made, Lebanon has not gained back its old vibrant role in the Middle East in specific and the world in general. There is therefore a need to re-brand and reposition Lebanon as a tourist destination in order to bring back again its old beautiful image as "Switzerland of the Middle East." The purpose of the re-branding and repositioning process in general is to attract tourists, because the survival of every tourist destination lies in its ability to attract visitors. The key to enticing visitors is to differentiate the destination and to market it in a proper way to potential visitors. (Nworah, 2006)

It is obvious that the use of place branding as a strategic marketing activity has increased significantly over the last century although the primary concept of branding has been widely utilized to sell products and not to promote tourist activities in countries. It is at the beginning of the 1990s that there was a serious attempt to create a distinctive place marketing approach (Ndlovu, 2009). Regarding all that, it is an aim of the study to research whether the concept of branding is equally applicable to tourism destinations. Furthermore, the study will use the branding and positioning of some renowned countries as a benchmark.

Recognizing the importance of branding, the study seeks to establish the current situation in Lebanon regarding branding and to examine tourists and Lebanese people's attitudes and experiences regarding the branding and the positioning process of a destination. The study takes cognizance of the importance of product branding as a useful marketing tool in general and demonstrates that, with a few adjustments; it could work well in respect to tourist destinations (Ritchie & Ritchie, 2003). The branding of tourism destinations: The past achievements and future challenges., 1998). However, in their book "The competitive destination: A sustainable tourism perspective," Ritchie & Crouch declare that, because branding has not been widely used in respect to tourism destinations (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) little is known about the manner in which and the extent to which the branding process could be implemented to the benefit of Lebanon as a touristic destination.

### **1.3 The Problem and its Setting**

Lebanon's popularity as a tourist destination has declined in the past few years as a result of bad perception caused by several national and regional economic and security problems, mainly the revolutions that occurred and still taking place in

several nearby countries. Lebanon was unable to benefit from the negative events happening in the nearby touristic countries by failing to create a safety zone to attract these countries' tourists, thus, the number of tourist arrivals is increasing and changing the perception towards Lebanon into a negative one, which is putting the entire industry in a serious jeopardy.

Moreover, in a globalized world there is a real danger to smaller destinations with weak marketing strategies and fluctuating situation such as Lebanon, of being excluded instead of being integrated into the global village where it could receive recognition, in case there was precise, clear and long-term marketing strategy. Lebanon, like any city, region or country in the world, faces the challenge of finding ways to sell its products and services; recruit the best people; attract visitors, investments and artistic or business events in order to play a prominent role in the world of tourism thus affairs. However, some research has shown that nation-branding programs seldom achieve anything useful or do not even get off the ground unless they are backed by the solid and strategic commitment of both the public and private sectors. The question that therefore arises is: To what extent can branding be used as a strategic tool to reposition Lebanon as a tourist destination?

#### **1.4 Significance and Contribution of the Study**

Ward in (Maheshwari, Vandewalle, & Bamber, 2008) claims that place branding as a strategic marketing activity has increased significantly over the last quarter century. Branding in tourism has become a very important issue, because it has the potential to contribute to the success of destinations. The concept of branding has been in existence for many years and is addressed in a wide array of academic fields including Geography and Urban Planning (Hankinson, 2004, p. 112)

“Whilst there is general agreement that branding does not apply to tourism

destinations, there is less certainty about how the concept translates into practical marketing activities and there are few empirical studies that have investigated the complexities and realities of the branding of destinations” (Saraniemi, 2009).

Surprisingly, many cities and industries in Europe and the United States of America have invested in branding and have successfully regenerated their economies in this manner (Hankinson, 2004, p. 118). Additionally, by the beginning of the 1990s there was a serious attempt to create a distinctive place marketing approach (Kavaratzis, 2008). Due to all that, tourism destination image has undoubtedly become one of the most important topics in tourism research during the past three decades (Saraniemi, 2009).

It is well accepted that a destination is not a product in its traditional sense, but more an array of different components, both tangible (e.g. attractions) and intangible (e.g. socio-cultural) (Henderson, 2007). “The concept of destination image is multidimensional, with cognitive and affective spheres, and has been defined as an amalgam of the knowledge, feelings, beliefs, opinions, ideas, expectations and impressions that people have about a named location” (Henderson, 2007). Branding is not only a differentiation of the product; it is also a differentiation of the consumer (Kavaratzis, 2008) and it is based on the building of relationships. The maintenance of customer loyalty is essential to ensure the sustainability of a brand. “The brand creates an image that is aligned with the product. As such, branding is a tool that can influence the positioning of the brand in the minds of tourists.” (Kavaratzis, 2008)

The findings of this study will hopefully contribute to the dimensions of image building and destination branding. The research is important in a theoretical context too, as it applies validated theories of branding to products, services and destination

marketing. The study develops a comprehensive and market-linked explanation of destination branding as well as its importance in destination marketing. The study could benefit the public and private sector in Lebanon and also the country at large. The Ministry of Tourism - Lebanon (MOT) could use it to evaluate its own strengths and weaknesses when assessing its current strategies to revive the tourism industry. It could also use the study as a baseline for the development of new branding strategies for Lebanon. Once tourism industry is revived, it could earn more foreign currency, bring more investment and contribute to economic development, reduction of unemployment as well as to the improvement of standards of living.

On the whole, the study is intended to establish an ideal destination brand framework that could contribute to the repositioning of Lebanon in the tourism marketplace. It focuses on the content and messages of the TV Campaigns done so far by exploring their points of strength and weakness. Such repositioning could lead to the creation of a recognizable brand identity for the destination "Lebanon". Should the recommendations of the study be implemented, they could assist the destination to attract foreign tourists in the face of negative perceptions.

An additional significance of this topic is that it combines two of the major sectors in Lebanon, Advertising and Tourism, that mutually cooperate to come up with different ideas and solutions to protect and improve the tourism sector in Lebanon in order to create a long-term positive image of this country that is less likely to be affected by any negative occurring situation.

Another importance of this topic is that, in Lebanon, there is still a significant lack of detailed and structured studies and plans about destination branding. The Ministry of Tourism still does not have a clear strategy or path for the touristic

advertising to follow. Therefore finding a solid long-term structure or strategy can be helpful to the Ministry's work in specific and to the tourism industry in general.

As an up-to-date and original topic related to the Lebanese experience, this thesis shall be useful because it will appeal to many people, specially those who are in the advertising and tourism domains. On the one hand, it deals with advertising and marketing strategies and on the other hand, it addresses tourism, which makes it both interesting and beneficial to both respective sectors.

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The absence of clear, comprehensive and empirically tested destination branding and positioning frameworks for Lebanon can hinder the creation of a consistent conceptualization of a destination branding strategy. As a result it handicaps marketers in developing effective destination branding strategies to improve the destination's performance. Therefore, the main objective of this research is it to recommend a new branding strategy for Lebanon to improve its image as a tourism destination.

The following are the detailed objectives of this study:

- a) To provide the context background and general orientation to the problem
- b) To clarify the context of branding within destination marketing and to outline the strategic role of branding of a destination, with the emphasis on TV Campaigns and the role of media in the branding process.
- c) To determine the current situation of Lebanon regarding destination marketing with particular emphasis on branding and positioning strategies
- d) To discuss and determine the methodology that should be followed in executing the study
- e) To determine tourists' awareness, attitudes and expectations regarding the



image of Lebanon as a tourism destination

## 1.6 Research Questions

In order to achieve the broad objectives of the study, the following research questions shall be investigated:

- a) What is the image of Lebanon?
- b) What affects the image of Lebanon?
- c) What is the most suitable image or strategy that could be employed in branding Lebanon as a tourist destination?
- d) What is the level of awareness of Lebanon as a destination brand? And what are the attitudes of Lebanese citizens as well as tourists towards it?
- e) Are tourists being properly reached by the TV campaigns done by the Ministry of Tourism?
- f) Is television still considered as an effective media tool? How effective are the TV campaigns run by the Ministry of Tourism in creating a positive image for Lebanon as a brand destination?
- g) What is the position of Lebanon among some tourism destination in the Middle East?

## **II - Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Throughout the research on branding, destination branding, positioning and tourism, different research studies, case studies, thesis dissertations, doctoral dissertations, books and articles related to the topic have been deeply examined to display a better understanding of the different strategies and tools of a destination branding campaign. The review provides a closer look at branding countries and the approaches or strategies used around the world to create or identify an image or position of a country inside the minds of potential tourists.

This literature review also gives the definitions of branding and destination branding, in specific, through the explanation of the word “brand” and “destination.” Furthermore, the review explores the studies done around the world that cover the different steps of destination branding and the creation of diverse promotional strategies for countries and cities. The analysis is to be projected to the Lebanese experience, thus enabling the Ministry to initiate a strategic plan to create the destination brand called Lebanon and to set up the key steps for promoting it.

### **2.2 Definition of a Brand and Brand Destination**

According to Keller (2008, p. 2) the word “brand” is an Old Norwegian word meaning “to burn” and refers to the procedure of marking animals by their owners in order to identify them. Today, branding is used to imprint an image of a product or service into the mind of consumers. There are various branding strategies applied to an almost endless array of products and services. In their dictionary of marketing terms, the American Marketing Association defines a brand as “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as

distinct from those of other sellers.” Thus, an essential goal of branding can be seen as choosing a name, term, symbol or package design that sets a product or service apart from its competition.

Simeon (2006, p. 464) stated, “A brand is a consistent group of characters, images, or emotions that consumers recall or experience when they think of a specific symbol, product, service, organization or location”. Branding must “attract and keep customers by promoting value, image, prestige, or lifestyle” (Rooney, 1995, p. 48). It must communicate information, minimize risk or increase trust (Knox, 2004), help identify or recall key factors, differentiate from competition and facilitate recommendations (Palumbo & Herbig, 2000)

The concept of branding has been broadly employed to sell products to consumers (Hankinson G. , 2005, p. 25). Kotler et al. (1999, p. 284) state that “branding involves the development of new products, positioning and repositioning of the new or existing products in respect of new or existing target market and thereby reviving the destination’s image in order to appeal to the existing or new markets.”

Herstein (2000) in Avraham & Ketter (2008, p. 15) defines a brand as a symbol characterized by a logo, a color, a shape, a package, or a design, an object, a concept or a combination of all these elements, aimed at pinpointing goods or services and distinguishing them from their competitors. Kapferer (2004) outlines a brand as a name with power to influence buyers. Its source of influence is derived from mental associations and relationships a brand build overtime among customers and stakeholders.

Arnold (1992, p. 2) suggests that branding has to do with the way in which customers perceive and buy products. As a definition, branding is considered to be a disciplined process used to build awareness and extend customer loyalty (Wheeler, 2009). "A brand embodies a whole set of physical and socio-psychological attributes and beliefs which are associated with the product" (Simoes & Dibb, 2001).

It is the blend of art and science that manages associations between a brand and memories and expectations in the mind of the brand's audience. It involves focusing resources on selected tangible and intangible attributes to differentiate the brand in an attractive, meaningful and compelling way for the targeted audience. (Grimaldi, 2003). A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values, which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003, p. 25).

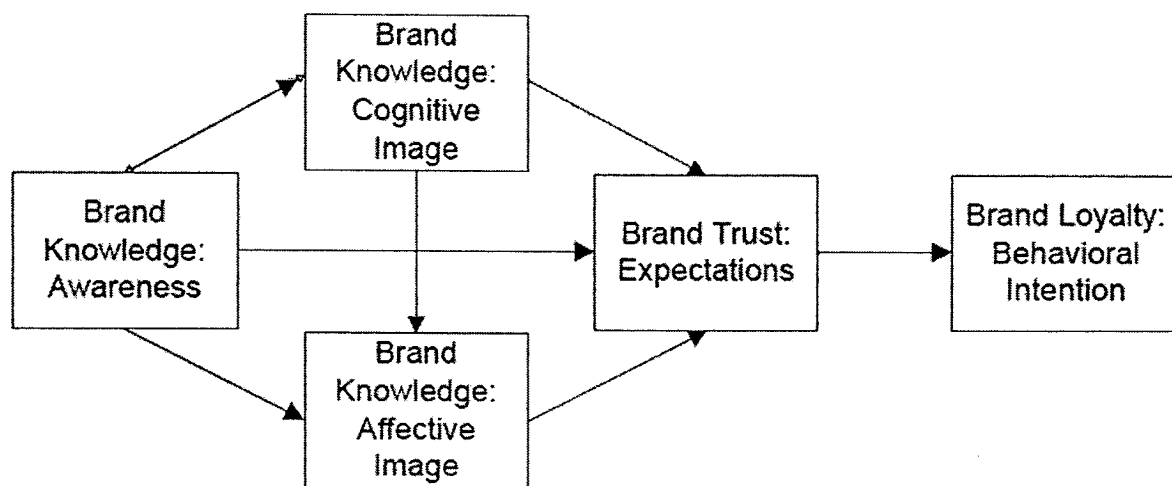
In her dissertation "Destination Branding in a Country context: A Case Study of Finland in the British Market," the author, Saira Saraniemi defines brand based on four hierarchically connected ways.

*"Firstly, destination brand conveys core values, commitment and a promise uniquely associated with the place, based on dynamic identities of the destination and its stakeholders. Secondly, it is a holistic and co-created identity, based on a destination's core values, interpreted by both supply and demand side stakeholders. Thirdly, the destination identity is defined as being originated in the interaction of all the components, characteristics and stakeholders of a place, such as a country. Fourthly, the destination is defined as a process, not a fixed and completed entity. Furthermore, destination branding is defined as identity management that is holistic, dynamic, co-created and committed, and is based on*

*core values of the destination and its stakeholders both in demand and supply side, in order to build a promise uniquely associated with the place.”* (Saraniemi, Destination Branding in a Country Context: A Case Study of Finland in the British Market, 2009, p. 67)

Aaker asserts that the primary role of branding is to identify the goods or services of either one seller or group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005). Wheeler (2009, p. 6) defines branding as a regulated process used to build awareness and increase customer loyalty; it is about seizing every opportunity to convey the reason behind people choosing one brand over another. It requires a solid strategy and a deep vision that reflects an understanding of the customers' needs and expectations. The brand identity process requires a combination of investigation, strategic thinking, design excellence, and project management skills.

In their article “A model of destination branding: Integrating the concepts of the branding and destination image,” the authors Qu, Kim & Im adopted Morrison and Anderson's definition of destination branding in 2002, which says that a destination brand can be defined as a way to communicate a destination's unique image and identity by differentiating a destination from its competitors (Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011). The essence of destination branding is to build a positive destination image that identifies and differentiates the destination by selecting a consistent brand element mix (Akotia, Ebow Spoi, & Frimpong, 2011). The image of a destination brand can be described as “perceptions about the place as reflected by the associations held in tourist memory” (Cai A. , 2002, p. 723)



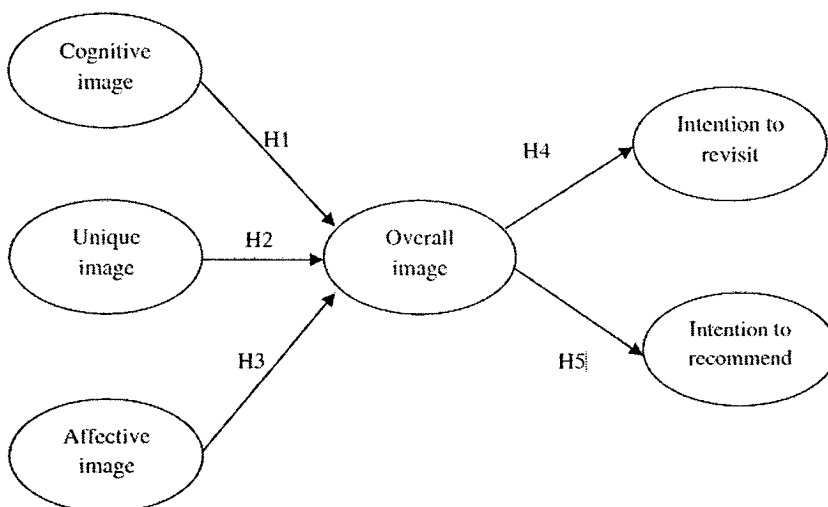
**Fig.1:** A Conceptual Model of Destination Branding (Cai & Hsu, 2009)

Brand knowledge consists of brand awareness and brand image, which constitute the sources of brand equity. Brand awareness is “reflected by consumers’ ability to identify the brand under different conditions” (Keller, 2003, p. 64). Cai & Hsu (2009, p. 3) quoted Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) noting that, “in branding literature, the concept of awareness has been widely utilized as a component of brand knowledge”.

Contemporary marketing philosophy recommends building long-term relationships with targeted customers. Hiscock (2001, pp. 32-33) says that “the ultimate goal of marketing is to generate an intense bond between the consumer and the brand, and the main ingredient of this bond is trust. However, there is “a remarkable lack of theoretical and empirical research on the consumer-brand relationship, and the concept of consumer’s trust in a brand is missing even in few extant works on such relationship.” Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2002, pp. 33-58) also noted some conceptual and empirical gaps in the much-researched area of brand loyalty. They also argued “conceptualizations of brand loyalty emphasize only the behavioral outcome of customers (e.g., purchase frequency and word of mouth),

while neglecting factors that precede behavior. They found that brand trust and brand affect combined could determine behavioral and attitudinal loyalties. While the brand affect, defined as a brand's potential to evoke consumers' positive emotional response, has been touched upon in tourism research, the concept of trust remains invalid in the destination image, as well as the emerging destination branding, literature."

The model of Qu, Kim and Im (2010) - Fig.2 - might help identify and understand the elements that affect the overall image of a country, which is Lebanon in this thesis. The model indicates that cognitive image; unique image and affective image affect the overall image of the country, which in return results with an intention to visit and intention to recommend.



**Fig.2:** A model of destination brand with hypothesized paths (Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011)

### 2.3 Between Product and Place Branding

From a marketing point of view, countries, nowadays, are no longer looked at just as countries or nations but also as brands. They are being marketed as so through the similar strategies used to promote products or brands. It is in the early 1990's that place marketing became very popular, on a local and international basis

(Avraham & Ketter, 2008). Ndlovu (2009, p. 69) quoted Ooi (2003) claiming that, “just like manufacturers’ brands, nation brands evoke certain values, qualifications and emotional triggers in the consumer’s/tourist’s mind about the likely benefits and values about the experience that they will have in the country concerned.” Van Gelder (2002) in Van Ham (2008, p. 129) said that brand managers offer four arguments for why branding is both necessary and beneficial for commercial and political actors alike:

*(1) Products, services and locations have become so alike that they can no longer differentiate themselves by their quality, reliability, and other basic traits. Branding adds emotion and trust to these “products,” thereby offering clues that make consumers’ choice somewhat easier. (2) This emotional relationship between brand and consumer ensures loyalty to the brand. (3) By creating an aspiration lifestyle, branding offers a kind of ersatz for ideologies and political programs that are losing their relevance. (4) The combination of emotions, relationships, and lifestyle (values) allows a brand to charge a price premium for their products, services, and locations, which would otherwise hardly be distinguishable from generics.*

A comprehensive country brand entails more than the communication of positive messages to the world. It entails the maintenance of the brand, delivery of the product and mobilizing local and international support in which destination Lebanon has relatively failed to achieve. Destination brand loyalty is the focus of the strategic destination marketing just like brand loyalty that is generally considered desirable from a strategic marketing perspective (Anastassova, 2011). Magne Supphellen in Forst (2004) explained, “In principle, [product] and place branding are the same. It’s all about identifying, developing and communicating the parts of the identity that are favorable to some specified target groups.” Supphellen added, “It is far more difficult to



obtain a fully integrated communication mix in place branding,” indicating that the analysis of identity and of target group perceptions, coupled with brand building activities, are much more complex for places than for products.

Ritchie & Crouch (2003, p. 65) revealed that branding has not been widely used in touristic destinations but it is becoming a very important issue. According to Ward (2008) in Maheshwari, Vandewalle, & Bamber (2008, p. 121) place branding, as a strategic marketing activity, has increased significantly over the last quarter century, because it has the potential to contribute to the success of destinations.

Branding strategies, marketing and advertising techniques are now embraced and applied by different countries that realized the importance of such step. This view has been shared by Anholt (2007) that destination branding is becoming an increasingly popular topic and strategy among cities, regions, communities, and countries, as it functions as a helpful means to attract manpower, citizens, investors, and tourists to a specific area through the creation of an appealing destination brand. “The concept of destination image is multidimensional, with cognitive and affective spheres, and has been defined as an amalgam of the knowledge, feelings, beliefs, opinions, ideas, expectations and impressions that people have about a named location” (Henderson, 2007). Although a destination inherits its brand, rebranding is, nevertheless, possible. However, any attempt at rebranding takes an enormous amount of time, effort, commitment and funding (Anholt, 2009, p. 47). So, if a destination wants to attract tourists, it has to give them reasons to visit. And it has to demonstrate how it is different from all other destinations, or it will not be seen as distinctive and worth visiting. It is about identifying what makes a destination unique and communicating these differences consistently in order to encourage potential visitors to understand the distinctive

appeals of the destination so that they will have the urge or will to visit it.

Suyama and Senoh (2006) in Avraham and Ketter (2008) offer an interesting specification for place branding named “brand-creating city,” suggesting that the branding of a place can be divided into three categories: brand spirit, brand resources and brand personality.

The general manager of the Milan office of Landor Associates, Antonio Marazza, explains that destination branding combines visual communication and marketing techniques to promote a destination. As in the branding of commercial goods and services, specific rules govern the positioning of the brand, the way its reputation is built, how customer preferences are addressed and loyalty is achieved, and how the brand is managed (Marazza, 2007). Branding nations is about identifying what makes a destination unique and communicating these differences consistently in order to encourage potential visitors to understand the distinctive appeals of the destination so that they will want to visit it (Anholt, 2009). “In the eyes of the traveler, tourism destinations are geographic areas that each has certain attributes and activities” (Szumiak & Singh, 2010, p. 2).

#### **2.4 Definition of a Tourist Destination, Destination Image and Destination Branding**

According to Tourism Western Australia (2006), “a tourist attraction is defined on one hand, as a physical or cultural feature of a particular place that meets one or more of the tourists’ specific leisure-related needs and, on the other hand, as favorable attributes of an area for a given activity or set of activities as desired by a given customer or market. They are spread into four categories: man made attractions, natural attractions, secondary attractions and negative attractions,

which are a set of attributes that drive tourists not to visit a particular destination like pollution or crime or an unstable political situation.”

In a paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Missouri Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus in 2002, Morrison and Anderson (2002) revealed that, “while a destination can be considered as a single product comprising of every kind of tourism operation in its geographical area, it can also be viewed legitimately as a composite product that comprises a mix of various components”. Ndlovu and Nyakunu (2009, p. 1) quoted Heath in an unpublished report for the University of Pretoria claiming that a “destination represents a mental picture in the minds of current and potential visitors”.

Perceptions such as cheap versus exclusive or safe versus dangerous often overshadow reality. Thus, the tourism industry operates in a complex and changing environment that is characterized by several challenges.

Throughout a review of literature related to tourism destination image some authors viewed the conceptualization of an image as a cognitive assessment of various dimensions of destination attributes. Boulding (1956) in Ahmed (1996, p. 2) presented a theory of human behavior based upon the concept of image. The theory states, “behavior is primarily affected by image and consumers are assumed to behave in accordance with what they know, what they think they know, and what they think they ought to know”. Another incorporated behavioral element, “basic consumer behavior” theory, suggests that consumers make product choice decisions based on the images they form of different brands” (Leisin B. , 2001). “A common agreement is that image depends on a cognitive evaluation of objects and the affective responses are formed as a function of the cognitive responses. An overall image of a place is formed as a result of both perceptual/cognitive and

affective evaluations of that place” (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p. 3). Perhaps the most elaborated model of image was developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993, pp. 3-13), who, after reviewing tourism and marketing literature related to image, proposed that an image is consisted of two components, one attribute-based and the other is holistic, both of which comprise functional and psychological characteristics.

In a tourism context, Morgan and Pritchard (1998, p. 140) stated that a destination brand “represents a unique combination of product characteristics and added values, both functional and non-functional, which have taken on a relevant meaning, which is inextricably linked to that brand, awareness of which might be conscious or intuitive.” In her research for the Finnmark University College, Nina Prebensen (2007, pp. 2-3) suggested that the destination brand consists of a mix of brand elements to identify and distinguish a destination through positive image building. So a brand image is not just a brand but also a source for its equity and differentiation and of great importance for the destination image. Taylor and Wheatley (1999) in Hanzae and Saeedi (2011, p. 3) noted that a destination brand could be a fully integrated system of experiences that focus on the customer. These definitions suggest that from the destination marketer’s point of view, a destination brand should represent a combination of tangible and emotional experiences communicated to the consumer through brand elements that should facilitate brand choice. From a consumer’s point of view, Ephron (1996, p. 27) said that the destination brand is a group of perceptions attached to various destination experiences sold under a specific brand name. Ballantyne, Warren and Nobbs (2006, pp. 339-352) mentioned that the brand name could positively influence the consumers or potential tourists’ final destination choice by reducing the number of

alternatives considered within the consideration set.

According to Dinnie in his book "Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice" (2008, p. 40) a nation brand or destination brand is the "unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all its target audiences". Furthermore, the concept of applying branding techniques to countries is in constant growth and development as countries originate nation brands to meet three objectives. These objectives are attracting tourists, stimulating inward investment and boosting exports. The establishment of a successful nation brand can also eliminate any misconceptions allowing the country to position or re-position itself favorably (Dinnie, 2008, p. 42).

As a result to the previous review, it is now evident that tourism destinations use different promotion and marketing communication strategies to enhance their destination image and thus influence the potential tourists' behavior.

## **2.5 Creating a Brand and Brand Destination: The Branding Process**

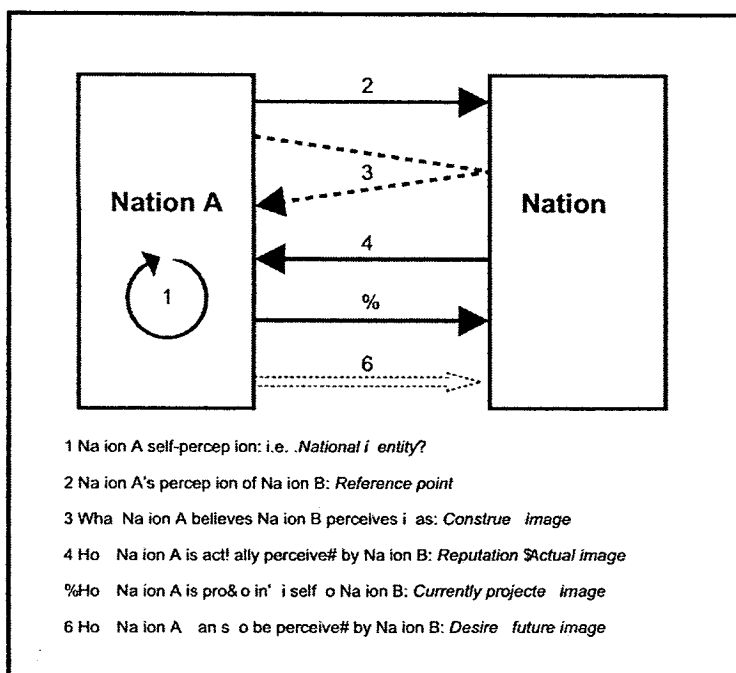
Nation branding is about the management of a nation's image and reputation and nation image is a nebulous concept that has various meanings and interpretations. The formation of a nation's image is a complex process in which different perspectives interact with each other. Henderson (2007, pp. 261-274) defined the concept of destination image as "multidimensional, with cognitive and affective spheres, and has been defined as an amalgam of the knowledge, feelings, beliefs, opinions, ideas, expectations and impressions that people have about a named location."

The relationship between identity and image can be summarized simply (Fan, 2008, p. 5) as follow:

(Self) Identity => Positioning / Nation branding => Image (held by other)

According to Fan (2008) there are six “viewpoints” or key perspectives in nation image. These perspectives are the following:

1. How does Nation A see itself?
2. How does Nation A see Nation B? (How do we see the outside world?)
3. What does Nation A believe Nation B thinks of it? (What do we believe our image in the world?)
4. How is Nation A actually being perceived by Nation B?
5. How is Nation A promoting itself to Nation B?
6. How does Nation A want to be perceived by Nation B?



**Fig.3:** The Six Perspectives of a Nation's Image (Fan, 2008)

According to Ndlovu (2009, p. 76) Destination branding starts with asking the following questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where would we like to be?
- How will we get there?

- How well are we doing in comparison with the competition?

In the case of Lebanon, the answers to these questions still lack clear information because there is no evident work of a solid marketing strategy to create the brand and thus the image of Lebanon.

However, based on a personal analysis, the questions and answers in our case could be as follows:

- **Where is Lebanon now?** Although the tourism sector in Lebanon is very active, yet the image of Lebanon as a brand destination, I believe, is still implicit and vague.

- **Where would Lebanon like to be?** Lebanon aims to be among the best destinations in the Middle East through its variant touristic facilities and services.

- **How will Lebanon get there?** Lebanon will not likely be able to attend or reach the level it is expecting without a clear and solid marketing strategy that promotes Lebanon as a unique tourism destination. The strategy would also be used as a crisis management technique that helps the tourism sector to survive any unexpected negative events.

- **How well Lebanon is doing in comparison with competition?**

Governmental and private efforts have been made to stabilize the tourism sector in the past few years. However, the lack of a clear marketing strategy that is translated into consistent and homogenous campaigns whether on TV or any other media, as well as the lack of awareness of the media about publishing negative news or events about Lebanon is restricting the country from gaining a more favorable image.

## 2.6 The Effects of Media (TV) on Branding a Tourism Destination

Mike Smith in Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2004, p. 12) underlined that potentials tourists' perception of places are critical, but known to be difficult to influence. Such perceptions are strongly shaped by the media, and although the efforts of media relations have always been considered part of the destination branding marketing mix, news media placements often are uncontrolled. In the opening session of a two-day meeting underway in Tbilisi, Capital of Georgia, of international and local media representatives and delegates from 37 countries, UNWTO Secretary-General Francesco Frangialli addressed the audience by saying that the relationship between tourism and the media is vital and complex. "Tourism is highly dependent on media reporting because the vast majority of travel decisions are made by people who have never seen the destination first hand for themselves," he added. When there is bad news or a crisis the impact on tourism can be devastating. "Tourists are scared away from destinations caught in the glare of round-the-clock disaster coverage, causing communities dependent on tourism to lose their source of livelihood," Frangialli said. (UNWTO, 2007)

Recognizing the need to assist nations in building their tourism destination offering as a prelude to the stimulation of the greater societal and economic wellbeing of the nation CNN International has over the past decade played a vital role as a partner to nations emerging into a new era of freedom and identity (Mendiratta, Anita - CNN's TASK Group, 2009). Through cooperative efforts with national Ministries of Tourism and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs / NTOs / NTAs) the world's most trusted new network, CNN, has been able to apply its unprecedented reach, credibility and creativity to drive destination awareness,



acceptance, appeal, differentiation and competitiveness. (Mendiratta, Anita - CNN's TASK Group, 2009)

Additionally, it is undoubtedly true that much of a destination's publicity is unplanned and unconnected with tourism, which might directly impact on a destination's tourism fortunes, both positively and negatively. Events, celebrities and movies associated with places can enhance (ex: Catherine zeta jones & wales – James Bond & London) or damage reputations (SARS, war).

Tourism organizations have tried to shape, influence or deflect media interest that may help or prevent the promotion and development of their particular destinations. Therefore place marketers actively promote their destinations as locations (ex: providing tax incentives for movie-makers to shoot movies in Ireland), or events (the 2010 golf Ryder Cup in Wales) and produce press kits and host visits for travel writers and journalists (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2004, p. 74).

The media has a crucial role to play in putting emerging destinations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia on the global tourist map, thus helping to boost the local economies, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2007). The Internet offers tremendous opportunities for developing strong destination brands that can deliver real benefits to tourists. The advantages over traditional methods of promoting the destination brand and fulfilling information requests that are specifically aimed at the needs of individual tourists are numerous. However, website in itself is not enough to guarantee continuing success of a tourist destination (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, Destination branding: creating the unique destination proposition, 2004, p. 12). In an age when all destinations can develop a website and produce a TV campaign, there must be a coherent strategy to develop, position and promote a significant presence whether

on traditional or electronic media.

“Consumers’ relationship with their TV screens is like that with an old friend. TV is a regular guy/gal, part of the family. You’ve seen it naked. You’ve heard it burp. You grew up with it and are comfortable around it” (BBDO, 2011, p. 10). When people of any age are viewing a TV screen, they are open and passive. It’s a one-way relationship. They expect to be entertained. TV is a great place to tell stories. Consumers are open to feeling something and forming close emotional bonds. Subsequently, and even though traditional media today is looked at as a less effective tool due to the high prices there are over 1.5 billion television sets in use in the world (BBDO, 2011), which means that TV ads can still be an impactful tool of influence and should not be disregarded from any marketing campaign. However, by looking at the results of the research done for this thesis, it is obvious that the Lebanese TV campaigns are unknown in foreign markets while negative events are present on international TV stations and networks. This issue threatens the image of Lebanon and prevents it from gaining more potential tourists.

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

According to Social Identity Theory created by Tajfel and Turner in 1985, the self-concept is comprised of a personal identity component that includes distinctive characteristics and a social identity component that includes salient group classifications (Fan, 2008). Fan (2008, p. 6) noted that a nation could classify itself and other nations into various categories or groups. National identity, like organization or product identity, is not constant. Identity is neither fixed and unchangeable, nor wholly fluid and manageable unlimited reconstruction (Parekh, 2000).

The theoretical framework includes several theories that will be elaborated and analyzed alongside the research. As a final step, only the theories that support the strategy to brand Lebanon as a tourist destination will be adopted.

Some persuasion and marketing theories, such as source credibility theory, Rank's persuasion model, Elaboration Likelihood Model are considered to be among the communication theories used in this case. All these theories can be used to understand tourists' needs and work to attract their attention towards Lebanon, and, eventually call them for action to come and visit Lebanon.

Source credibility theory is meant to be the cognitive side since it depends on rational thinking. This theory was first introduced by Hovland, C., Janis, I., Kelley, H. (University of Kentucky, 2001) and it states that people are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible. So, by bringing some "credible" people into the TV campaigns to promote Lebanon, tourists might feel more secure and persuaded by the testimonies of those people. This theory might create a more informative ad, there could be a use of some people or the information of some people in the tourism or advertising domains in a creative way to make potential tourists feel more informed in cases where emotional appeals might work more on Lebanese emigrants who already miss their country.

Persuasion theories are affective and mainly depend on emotions without excluding the informative part. A study by the advertising agency BBDO found that consumers are more likely to find differences between competing brands, where emotional appeals are used, than between those predominately relying on rational appeals (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003). It might be, however, more useful to use both cognitive and affective theories to come up with better results in creating a destination brand named Lebanon.

According to Rank's persuasion model, persuaders choose one among four strategies of action.

1. Intensify their good points
2. Intensify the weak points of the competitors
3. Downplay their weak points
4. Downplay the good points of the competitors (brittanyscrapbook.wordpress.com, 2011)

The Ministry of Tourism constantly used this theory in its TV commercials whether by intensifying the good aspects of tourism in Lebanon or rejecting the negative situations that the country was facing. In one of the ads, named "It's the Lebanon Blues," the Ministry used this theory in another aspect, which is by downplaying the good points of the competitive countries such as France and England.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is consisted of two parts: central route and peripheral route. In the central route, individuals carefully think about the elements of the message in order to determine whether its proposal makes sense and will be beneficial to them in some way (BehaviourWorks, 2012). It involves being persuaded by the arguments or the content of the message. A commercial of a computer or any technical softwares are a good example of central route persuasion because they include facts and information that the customers might need rather than emotions.

On the other hand, the peripheral route involves mechanisms where message recipients use simple signs or mental shortcuts as a means of processing the information contained in a message. For example, a sign might involve an emotional state (e.g., "happiness") that becomes positively associated with the

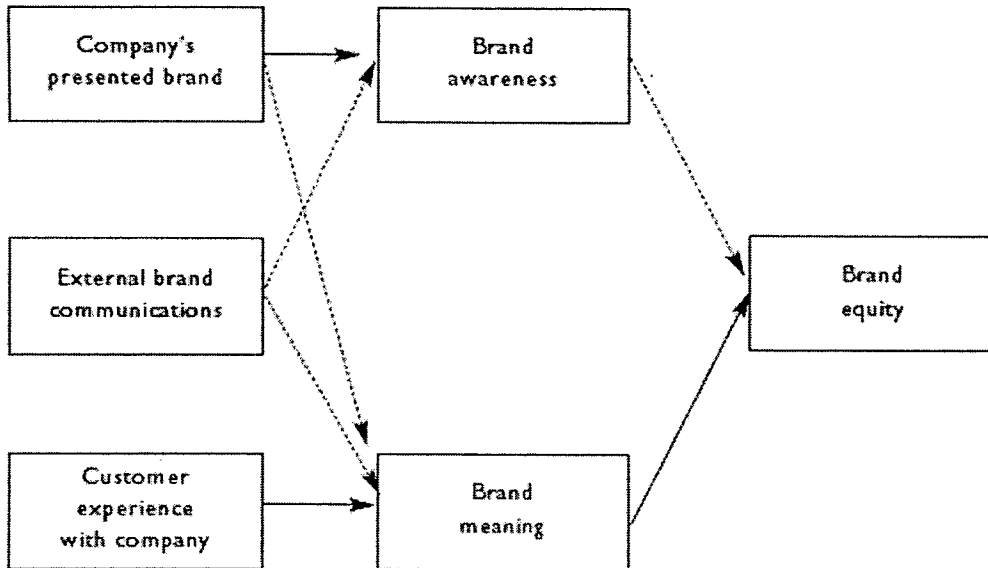
message's advocated position, or a recipient might simply agree with a message without a careful consideration of the arguments or a deep thinking on the basis that it is being delivered by an expert on the matter (e.g., "experts are generally correct").

This theory can be helpful when thinking about the content of the commercials that should be used in the future by the Ministry of tourism. There could be an application of this model with its both paths, central and peripheral, in order to grab the different types of the potential tourists.

As a conceptual framework, a psychological approach will be used, yet in a touristic context. My personal opinion is that advertising and psychology seem to be inseparable, so the relationship will be explored between advertising and tourism from a psychological point of view. Psychology in advertising has long been used as an effective means to sell a product or service (Gresko, Lynn, & James, 1996). It is essential in any advertising campaign and strategy because it has been shown that emotions lead to actions in a faster and deeper way than rational ways of persuasion. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs states that since we are motivated by our unsatisfied needs, once we have the basics of food and shelter taken care of, we begin to be motivated by our need to be a part of something larger than ourselves. "It's only natural for people to connect with products and services that speak to such powerful emotional drives and give meaning to our purchasing decisions, especially the discretionary ones." (Weisnewski, 2005)

Consequently, tourists need to feel that Lebanon offers them a unique and different experience otherwise they will pick another country. The strategy should focus on the emotional side to attract tourists and stakeholders' attention towards Lebanon, but it should also give some information that tourists find to be important

for their decision to choose a destination. So destination image is important because of the role it plays in the potential tourists' decision-making processes (Roostika, 2012).



Berry's (2000) service branding model (Brodie, Glynn, & Little, 2006)

The model shown above represents the steps to create brand equity. It sets the elements involved in the process like brand awareness and brand meaning. This thesis will go through these steps by replacing “company” with “Lebanon” in order to find out the major elements that help create a positive image for Lebanon with the emphasis on TV campaigns.

### **III - Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction: Qualitative and Quantitative Research**

To answer the research questions, the approach adopted for the study included both quantitative data analysis research and qualitative research. They were used in the thesis methodology because combining qualitative and quantitative research is becoming more and more common (Anderson, 2006). The core assumption of mixed method research inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone. (Creswell, 2014)

A quantitative data analysis research would be in the form of a survey questionnaire. The quantitative method is a formal, objective and deductive approach to problem solving (Jones & Bartlett, 2013, p. 35). This method is expected to explain the effectiveness of the campaigns done by the Ministry of Tourism and to study the tourists' perceptions about Lebanon. The sampling shall include both Lebanese nationals and tourists aged 18 years and above and from both genders. The survey will seek to reveal to which extent the messages in the commercials are well received and remembered by the audience, and if they have created a good feedback or not.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, in case the collection of information is more needed than figures. Qualitative research generates rich, detailed and valid (process) data that contribute to in-depth understanding of the context (Anderson, 2006). The qualitative research used in this thesis includes interviews with a number of Lebanese and foreigners who are closely interested or involved in the tourism, advertising and marketing domains in Lebanon.

A qualitative research would provide the information needed to analyze the

strategy used by the Ministry of Tourism on a higher level since it will provide clear feedback and opinions about the campaigns done so far. This will also help in the long-term as a strategic guideline for setting the main steps for improving or maintaining a solid and effective policy for creating a positive and consistent identity for Lebanon.

### **3.2 Survey**

The survey was designed to collect data from various Lebanese citizens and tourists. The data were then presented in a user-friendly manner to make it easy to read and interpret the results.

The target population of this study is tourists 18 years and above; Lebanese people, from both genders, aged 18 years and above, in addition to industry experts, public officials, syndicates as well as the Ministry of Tourism employees. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions that summarize the thesis objectives and was handed to 82 subjects that represent the target population. Nonprobability sampling in the form of convenience or available sample was used in the research. Convenience sampling is defined as “a collection of readily accessible subjects for study” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 92). For this research, the subjects were colleagues, friends, people who showed interest in the topic and tourists found in different touristic sites such as Beiteddine Palace and the Cedars Natural Reserve. Li (2005) in (Ndlovu, Branding as a strategic tool to reposition a destination: A survey of key tourism stakeholders in Zimbabwe, 2009) noted that the identification of the consumer target is very important because various consumers may have differing brand knowledge as well as structures, perceptions and preferences regarding the brand.



Nonetheless, interviews stress more on the details and information instead of percentages so through the combination of all these techniques, a clear and reliable idea has been formed. Opinions and expectations has been revealed. This might be helpful for the progress of the analysis of the campaigns done by the Ministry of Tourism, and thus for setting some recommendations about new marketing strategies for Lebanon using more effective tools.

The questionnaire includes questions regarding the TV commercials launched by the Ministry of Tourism, the percentage of people who actually recognize or recall them, the percentage of people who like them and the percentage of people who think that a solid marketing strategy must be adopted by the Ministry to improve the Tourism sector. It also aims at determining the circumstances that might negatively affect the tourism sector, the effect of the nearby political unrest and identifying the most attractive tourism elements in Lebanon as well as going through the image that the interviewees have for Lebanon. (See Appendix II for survey questions).

A qualitative research might seem more detail-oriented for this thesis but a quantitative research is still a must. This method is faster and less time consuming to determine the people's perceptions towards the image of Lebanon and examine the negative and positive elements that the tourism sector is facing.

### **3.3 Interviews Results**

Seven Interviews were made with the following people: Mrs. Nada Sardouk Ghandour, the General Director of the Ministry of Tourism; Mrs. Mona Haddad Fares, the Director of the Promotion Department in the Ministry of Tourism; Mrs. Claudia Karam, the head of the Promotion Division in the Ministry; Mr. Tamer El Chamaa, the financial manager of Marta Group, the company responsible for the marketing of Lebanon; and also Mrs. Nayla Mouawad, the corporate

communications manager at Impact BBDO, which a leading and international advertising agency.

In addition to the previous five interviews, a one-on-one interview was also made with Mr. Arnaud Fratani, a French resident living in Lebanon for the past 5 years. During the interview Mr. Fratani was exposed to different TV commercials about Lebanon and his comments and opinions were recorded. A seventh online interview was made with Mrs. Lisa Richter, a German citizen and a potential tourist who has never visited Lebanon before. The aim of this interview was to identify the perception that potential tourists could have when exposed to these commercials, and whether they are seen as effective enough to grab their attention and convince them to visit Lebanon. The results of the last two interviews will be analyzed in chapter 4 that discusses the TV commercials created by the Ministry of Tourism.

Nada Sardouk, the General Director of the Ministry of Tourism, stressed that the Ministry is dedicated to maintain a positive image of Lebanon through consistent messages about its natural, cultural and historical beauty, although the unstable situation since the Israeli War in 2006 and the political conflicts that followed is making it hard for the Ministry to focus on one strategy. However, they try to overcome these obstacles by creating campaigns that always reflect the good side of Lebanon.

Sardouk argued that it is almost impossible at this stage to maintain one single image for Lebanon due to the political situation and the presence of diverse touristic elements such as cultural tourism, eco tourism, nightlife tourism, food tourism, medical tourism etc. When Mrs. Sardouk was asked about the best TV commercial made so far she replied undoubtedly "it's all in Lebanon" which was produced and broadcasted in 2001.

On the other hand, Mona Fares, Director of the Promotion Department in the Ministry of Tourism, stated that Lebanon has a diverse image coming from a well-known historical, natural, religious, events, nightlife and eco-tourism that have been attracting a large number of tourists. In a question about the effectiveness of the TV campaigns and if there are any plans to go International, she replied that TV campaigns are still effective as long as the viewer is still a receiver and that TV remains a major medium in people's lives. She added that many campaigns were launched on International Networks such as CNN, EuroNews and Euro Sport, which means that the exposure of Lebanon has the potential of reaching about 20.000.000 immigrants and potential tourists around the world.

Fares also added that once the image of a country is created, it remains regardless of any influences. She added that new markets show no interest in Lebanon, old markets (mainly Arabs), however, love this country and they will be reminded of it, through the appropriate advertising, once the circumstances improve. In a question about the strategy adopted by the Ministry of Tourism, she said that the Ministry aims at developing and maintaining existing markets to keep them interested, increasing the efforts among Lebanese immigrants and working on opening new "friendly" markets. She stated that the Ministry is now open to Cyber world through developing and improving the Ministry's website that was first launched in 1995 so that it becomes more salient and flexible with the new technologies.

Claudia Karam, Head of the Division of Production in the Ministry of Tourism, cited the TV campaigns created by the Ministry between 1999 and 2013. They include around 12 campaigns, video clips and documentaries, and claimed that these campaigns aimed at creating a positive image of Lebanon. Some

commercials were humorous while others were emotional and she stressed that they were able to produce the image needed and convey the required message. She said that the content of the commercials depends on the material given by the advertising agencies in the private sector, and it also highly depends on the events and circumstances taking place in the country. She added that due to budget constraints the TV campaigns were launched on local stations that happen to have international reach, except for Smile Lebanon campaign, which was aired mainly on international networks.

Karam revealed that there was no considerable research done to measure the effectiveness of the TV campaigns but efforts have been established to keep an up-to-date measurements and YouTube is considered as one of these methods. About the marketing strategy, she said that the Ministry does not follow any clear marketing strategy in promoting the image of Lebanon, such work has been done independently by some researchers or academics. She stressed that the Ministry is aware of the updates in the branding and marketing techniques through the international marketing and advertising agencies that the Ministry works with. In 2013, there was a cooperation with Marta Group, which is an international marketing company, for the Ministry's public relations campaign in Brazil.

In order to have a better understanding about the work of Marta group with the Ministry, an Interview took place with Mr. Tamer Al Chamaa, Finance Director at GAA Marta Consulting. Mr. Chamaa presented GAA Marta Consulting as a tourism development, country representation and event management specialist. The company is responsible for promoting and representing Lebanon worldwide. The cooperation between Marta and the Ministry of Tourism started in June 2012 during which several accomplishments were made and they were as follows:

- Participation in most of the exhibitions and travel fares worldwide
- PR campaigns in attractive markets such as; Brazil, Russia, GCC. Etc.
- Family Trips to Lebanon
- Press Trips to Lebanon.
- Road shows to attractive markets
- Workshops in Beirut and abroad.
- Advertising campaigns.

When asked about today's image of Lebanon and the way to enhance it, Chamaa replied that everyone likes to visit Lebanon because there is an awareness of its strength as a touristic destination but tourists wait for the convenient time to visit it. For Chamaa, Smile Lebanon campaign is considered to be the best campaign so far because it served its task. Regarding the effectiveness of TV campaigns in attracting tourists and whether there are alternative ways to promote Lebanon as a destination brand, Chamaa said that TV campaigns are still effective due to their massive reach, responsive reaction, emotional involvement, high return on investment (ROI), the fact that it constitutes as a catalyst for other media (promoting Lebanon would also promote the airline, hotels etc.), and is considered as a source of a good word-of-mouth advertising. As for alternative ways to promote Lebanon, he recommended that the Ministry of Tourism start working on abroad public relations campaigns.

In an interview with Nayla Mouawad, Corporate Communications Manager at Impact BBDO, she named the TV campaigns done by Impact BBDO for the Ministry of Tourism since 2001. They are: It's all in Lebanon commercial (2001) - Wadih Safi commercial (2002) - Airport commercial (2006) - Ups and downs commercial (2008) - It's hard to leave Lebanon commercial (2009) - Gemmayzeh/noise commercial

(2010) - 365 days of Tourism commercial (created in 2003 and recreated in 2010) - It's the Lebanon blues commercial (2011) - Don't go to Lebanon (2013).

In order to have an insight into the process of creating the idea, Mouawad explained that it is mostly teamwork even if it was a one person's idea, brainstorming sessions would be held to discuss, improve and approve the idea. The message or the objective of the campaign is usually given by the Ministry of Tourism through a brief of all the requirements.

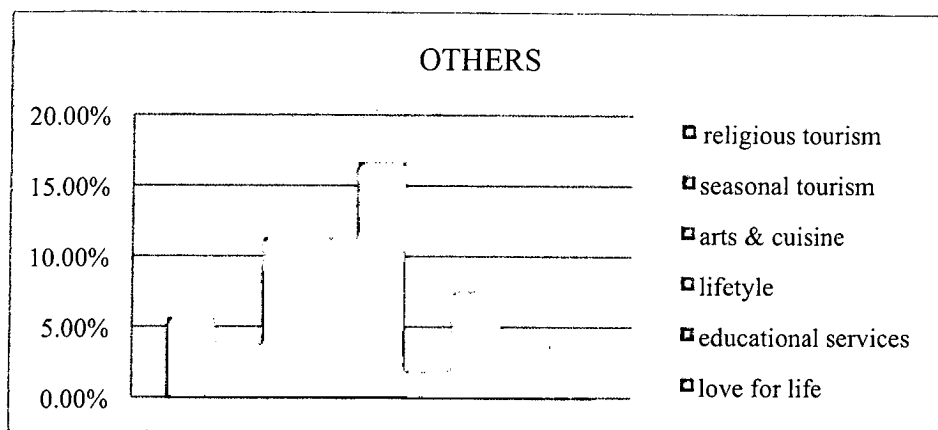
Mouawad was asked whether the political and security issues affect the content of the advertising and she replied positively, "Don't go to Lebanon" and "come back to Lebanon" TV commercials were meant to deal with urgent situations. She added that the turbulences that happen every now and then jeopardize tourism seasons and specially summer time. So the content of the ads should show a different face of Lebanon and send a positive message saying that despite the danger there is always something good about this country that is worth visiting. The content of the ads must answer specific needs such as being a safe place, being worth visiting and being an interesting destination. These needs must be present in the message sent to viewers in order to convince them to come. This way, and despite all the unexpected crises, Lebanon can still be a worthy touristic competitor in the Middle East.

Mouawad's opinion about "Don't go to Lebanon" TV commercial is that it is the best because it had the perfect mix between high production values, great direction, two key stars and great music that matches perfectly the emotional value. This ad also did not contain the clichés of using Lebanese women and they were replaced with added value that people love (family picnicking, friends gathering etc.) and beautiful scenes of live lifestyles. She also noted that "it's hard to leave Lebanon"

campaign won the silver medal at the Golden Gate City Awards in 2010. In a question about the toughest period that Lebanon witnessed since 2003 and affected the image and the advertising of Lebanon, Mouawad said that 2006 was the hardest because during that year the country witnessed many unpleasant events, which made it difficult for them to promote Lebanon as a safe destination.

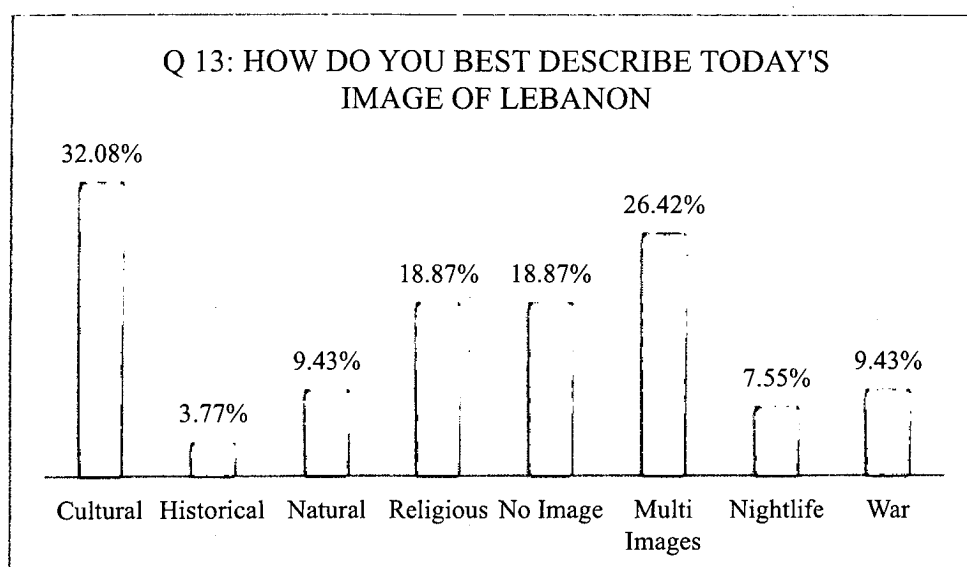
As for measuring the effectiveness of the TV commercials done for the Ministry of Tourism, she explained that nowadays Impact BBDO is going more deeply into that direction especially with the rise of social media, which makes it easier to know people's reactions about the commercials. The new trend of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter facilitated the measuring process because they can easily reveal the number of likes, dislikes and number of sharing and also know the comments about each ad. She revealed that "Don't go to Lebanon" campaign gained around 463.000 views within two months, which is considerable. Mouawad still believes in the power of TV campaigns and in television as an effective medium even if we are in the "online" era. She pointed out that both channels are essential for the success of any campaign as they are complementary. Mouawad is familiar with the fact that the Ministry of Tourism has budget constraints that are holding it from going international and added that "Don't go to Lebanon" commercial was aired on regional stations and also as online banners on Facebook for a better exposure. She indicated that online paid media is less expensive with high numbers of viewers, which makes it a very effective alternative in any upcoming campaign.

The answers of the interviewees concerning the effectiveness of TV campaigns answer the question "c" in the research questions. They all agree that television still has a remarkable presence in people's lives, thus it is still effective in promoting a positive image for Lebanon. These answers, however, contradict the survey results



Fifty-six of the subjects believed that the promotion of Lebanon requires the joined efforts of the public sector, private sector and the Lebanese citizens all together. A percentage of 24% thought it is the public sector's responsibility, 20% replied with private sector and 15% assumed it is the Lebanese citizens task. And in the question "does the Government and the Ministry of Tourism serve well the promotion of Lebanon" 49% answered with yes, 39% with no and 11% had no answer.

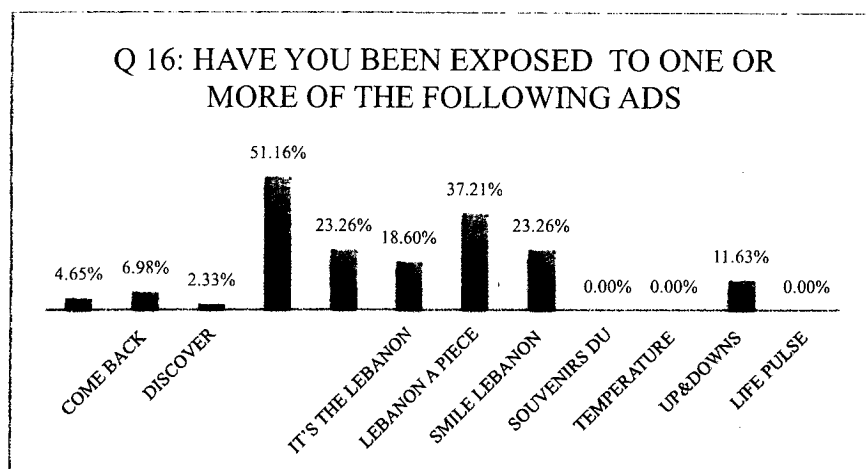
In order to know the Lebanese subjects' perception towards the image of their own country and also to answer the research question "a", they were asked about the image that best describes Lebanon, and the answers were the following:





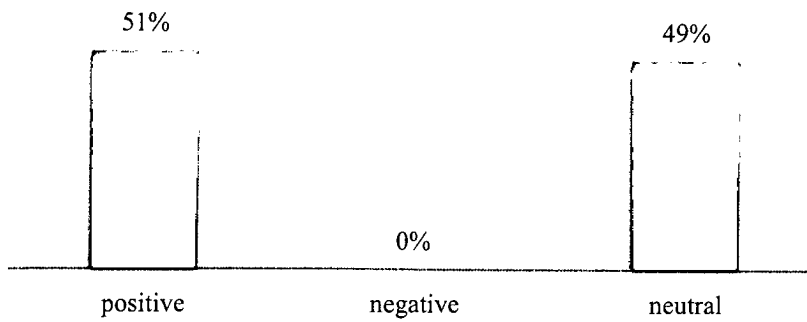
The subjects were then asked whether they were exposed to at least one TV touristic commercial for Lebanon. Eighty one percent answered yes and 19% said no.

Among the 81% the following chart represents the percentage of each commercial's exposure. It is obvious that "It's All in Lebanon" TV commercial was seen as the most popular with 51%. "Souvenirs du Liban," "Life pulse" and "Temperature" TV commercials had 0% recall. This might be due to the inability to make a link between the title and the commercial because the commercial might be familiar to them but they cannot recall its title, therefore they could not know which title represents a particular commercial.

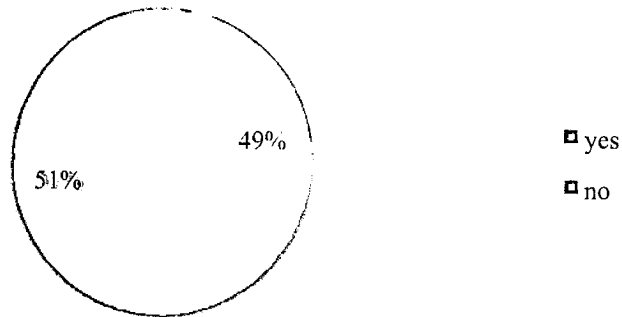


Since it is important to analyze the TV campaigns launched by the Ministry of Tourism, it was essential to know how effective these commercials were in grabbing the viewers' attention and creating a positive image for Lebanon. This question also answers the research question "e". Therefore, a series of questions were asked to determine the reactions to these TV commercials, and they are as follow:

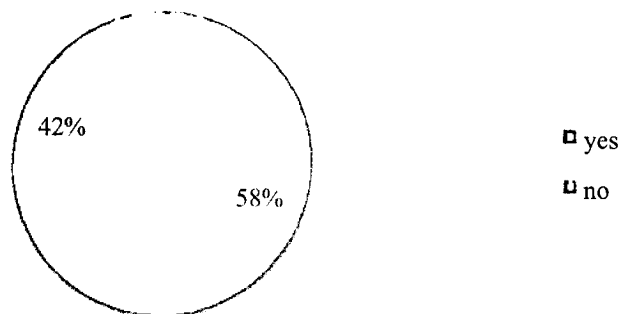
Q 17: HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE IMAGE OF LEBANON THE WAY IT IS PORTRAYED IN TV COMMERCIALS?



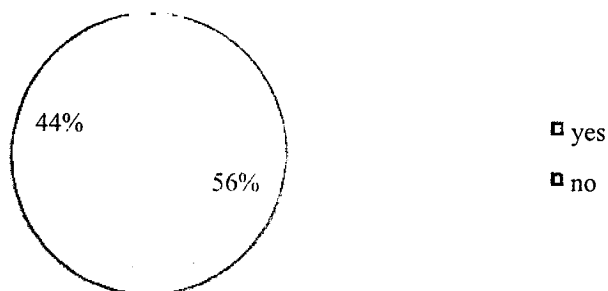
Q 18: DID ANY OF THESE ADS CREATE THE URGE TO VISIT LEBANON?



Q 19: DO YOU THINK THE IMAGE OF LEBANON HAS IMPROVED SINCE 2005?



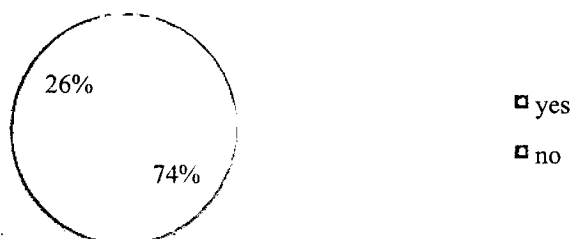
Q 20: DO YOU THINK THAT THESE TV CAMPAIGNS CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE IMAGE OF LEBANON THROUGHOUT THE YEARS?

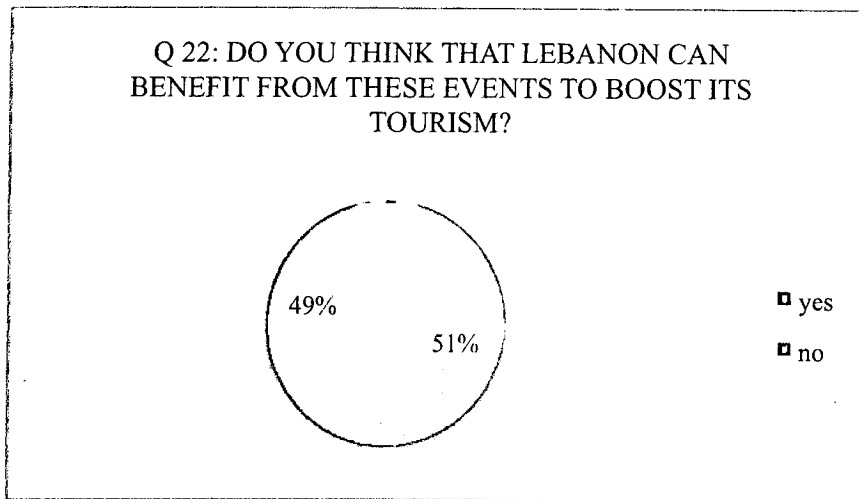


The results showed close responses between the answers, which reflect a balance between the people's views. However, it is now clear that people still believe in the effect of TV campaigns in promoting a country's image either positively or negatively. This means that the Ministry of Tourism should not reject the idea of using television to promote Lebanon. The main concern, however, is the way television is being used for this promotion.

Another concern is not only the effect of TV commercials, but also the way Lebanon is portrayed on television. Does the news about nearby revolutions affect the reputation of Lebanon? Can Lebanon benefit from these revolutions to boost its tourism sector? The answers for these questions are found in the following charts:

Q 21: DO YOU THINK THAT THE REVOLUTIONS HAPPENING IN THE NEARBY COUNTRIES HAVE AFFECTED THE IMAGE OF LEBANON?

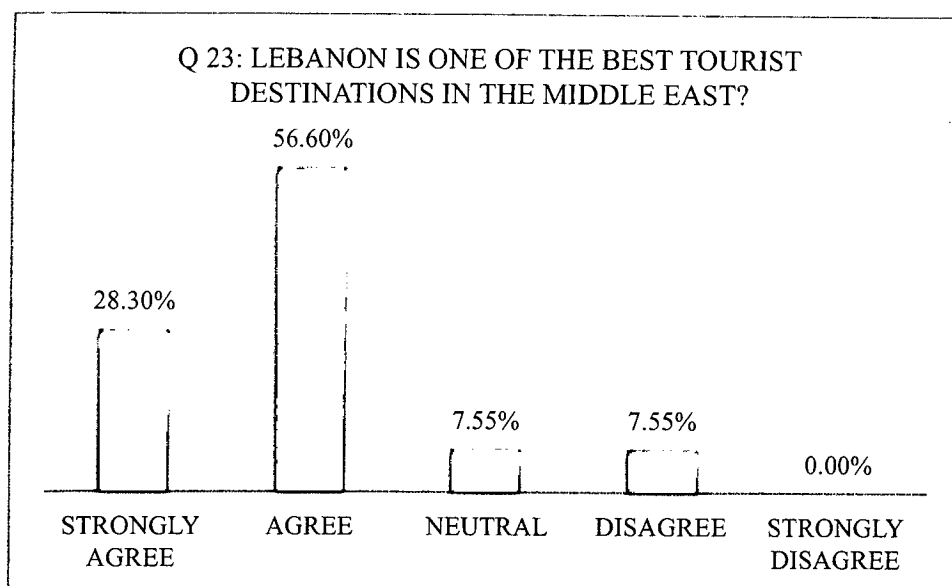




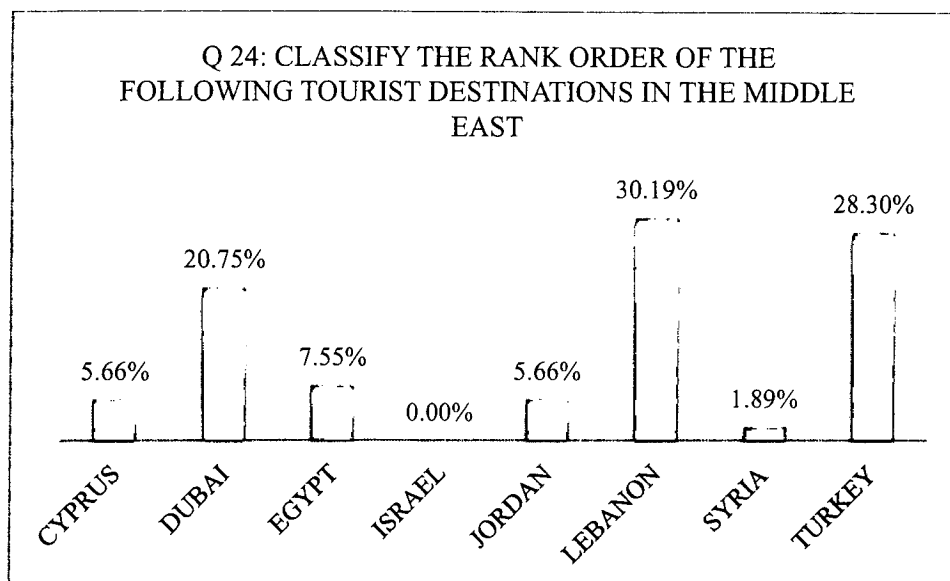
The majority of the targeted subjects admitted that the nearby revolutions do affect the image of Lebanon. The subjects were divided into almost half concerning whether Lebanon can benefit from these revolutions with a slight higher percentage for those who answered positively (51% yes, 49% no). This could be regarded as a promising thing because it shows the Lebanese subjects' intention to turn negative events into the benefit of their country. How this can be reached needs a separate research because our concern here is the TV campaigns. Thus, the question here is how can the Ministry of Tourism benefit from the nearby revolutions to better promote Lebanon as safe touristic destination.

Subjects were finally asked to classify Lebanon among some other touristic destinations in the Middle East. This is intended to identify the perception that the subjects have for their own country.

The results show that 57% of the sample agrees that Lebanon is one of the best tourist destinations in the Middle East. This positive result is a good index for the tourism sector and the image of Lebanon.



And in order to have a deeper idea about the presence of Lebanon among other Middle Eastern tourist destinations, subjects were asked to rank the chosen countries on a scale from 1 to 6. The results are the following:



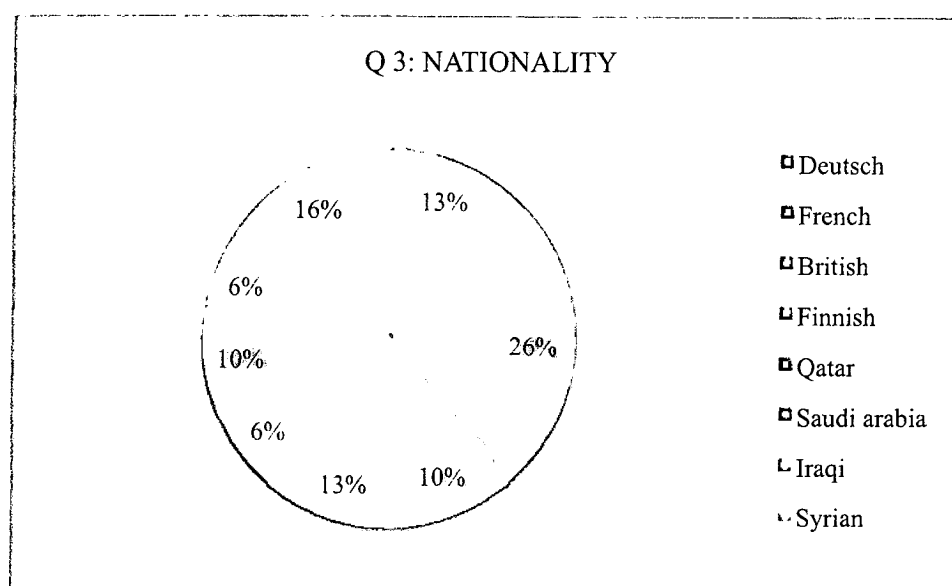
Lebanon got the highest percentage (30.19%) for the first position, which means that Lebanon, in the minds of its citizens, is still the number one tourist destination in the Middle East.

### 3.4.2 Tourists

Same questions, in addition to few more were given to 30 tourists. It was extremely essential to address tourists to determine their perceptions, thoughts and opinions.

The aim was to know the image that Lebanon has among tourists as well as to identify the main concerns that they have and also to capitalize the positive comments they mention.

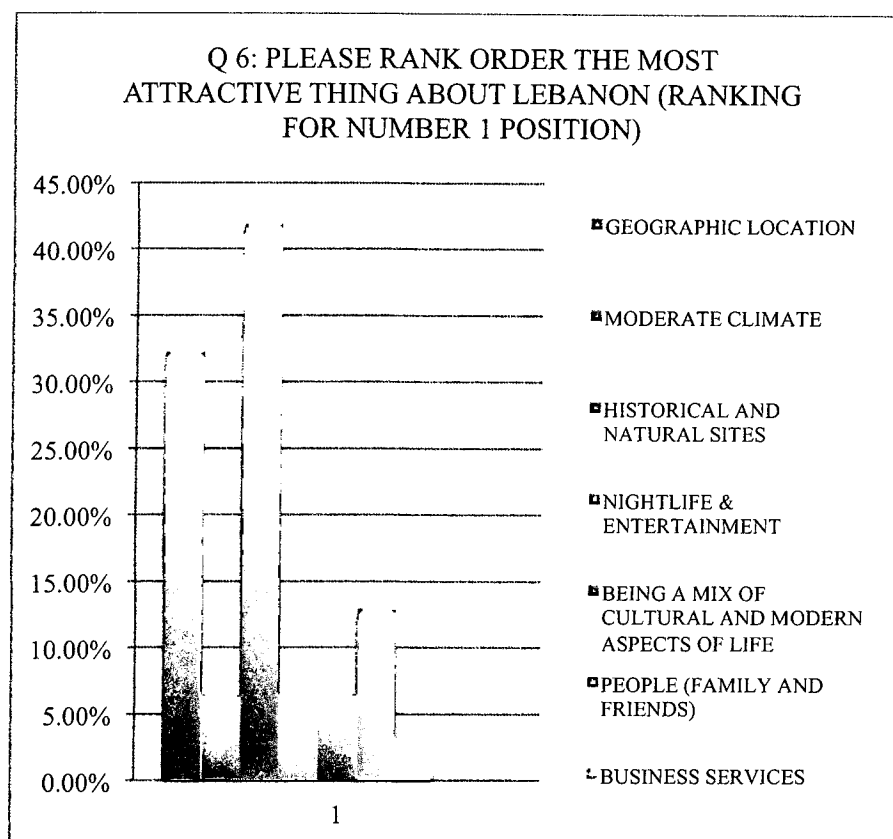
Tourists were 55% females and 45% males with a majority range between 20 and 40 years old (55%). All were handed the questionnaire. Thirty five percent of them have visited Lebanon before and they recommend it for other tourists. Their nationalities are found in the following chart:



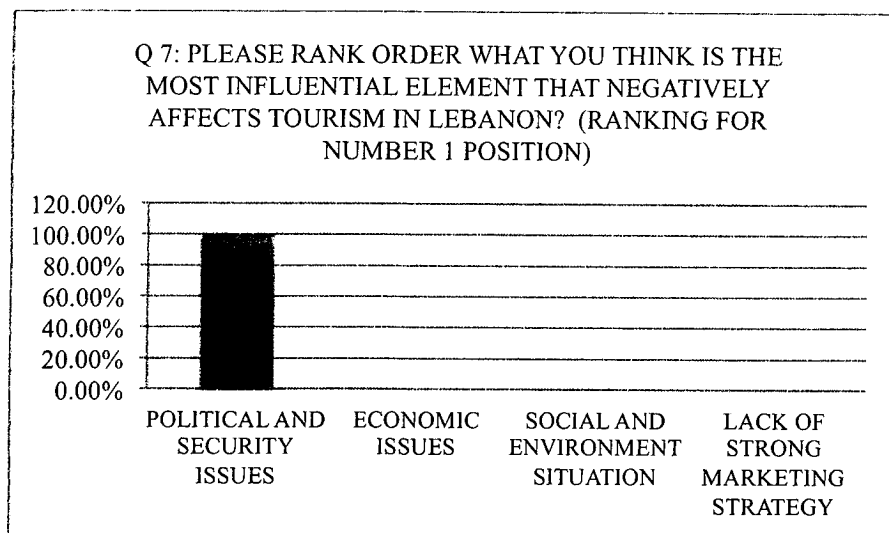
The nationality of tourists is an important variable. It allows examining how the cultural differences that affect their perceptions. Do Arab tourists have the same image of Lebanon as the Westerns? Do they share the same expectations and concerns? Have they been exposed to the TV commercials of the Ministry of Tourism? How have they been affected by them?

A set of questions was handed to tourists aiming at identifying the positive and negative traits of Lebanon as a tourist destination.

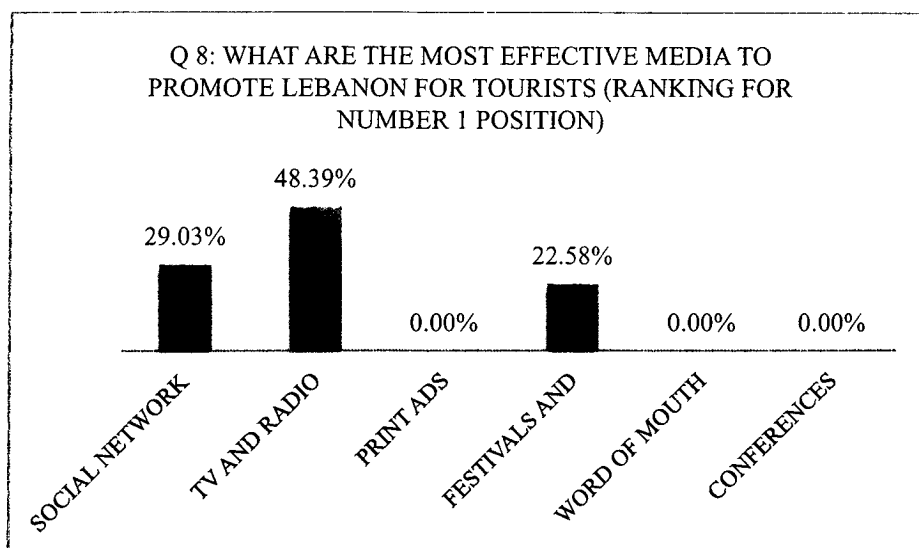
The most attractive element about Lebanon to them showed that historical and natural sites come in the first position (around 40%), while geographic location come in the second place (around 30%) and the Lebanese people come in the third (almost 10%). This ranking shows the good image that Lebanon has as a historical and cultural land and can be highlighted in further studies about branding Lebanon.



Responses to the opposite question about the negative elements that might affect tourism the most showed a 100% agreement that the political and security issues are the tourists highest concerns. This was clearly shown in the chart below.



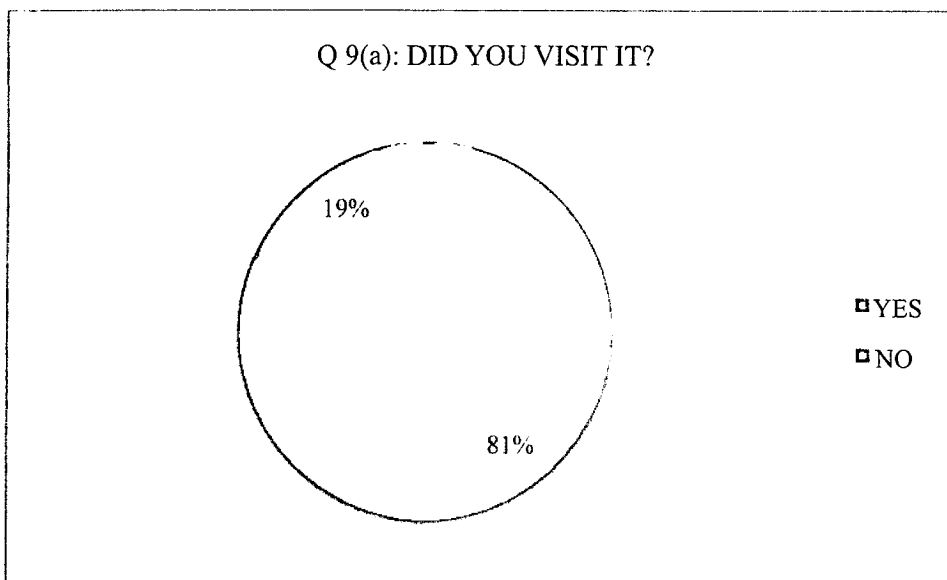
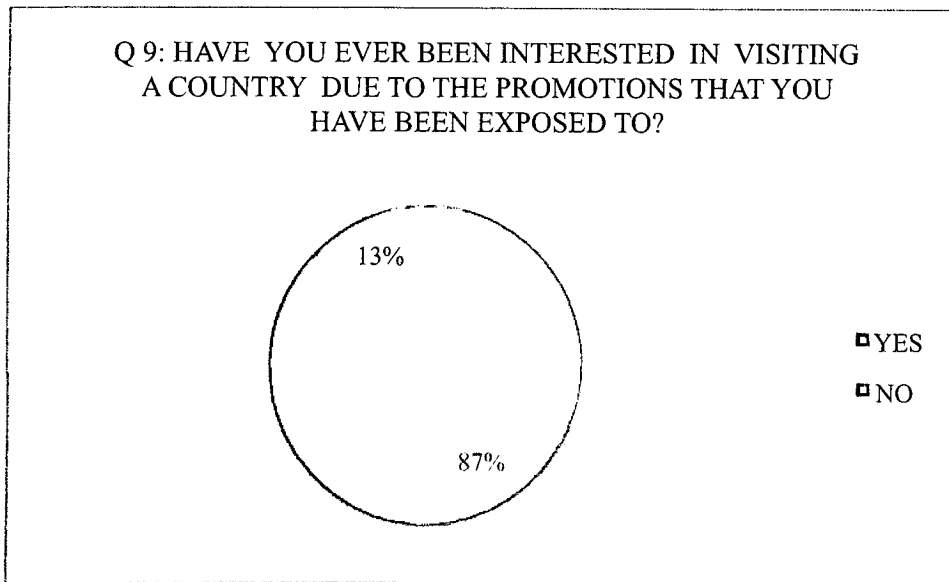
In order to determine the best media to be used in promoting Lebanon for tourists, interviewees were asked to rank different media outlets. As a result, TV and radio ads got the first rank (around 48%) while social network came in second place (around 29%) and festivals and events were third (around 23%). These percentages show the power that television still has in any marketing and advertising strategy.



The following questions determine the effectiveness of TV commercials in attracting tourists. Eighty seven percent of the subjects showed an interest in a country, which they have already seen an ad for and 81% said they actually visited



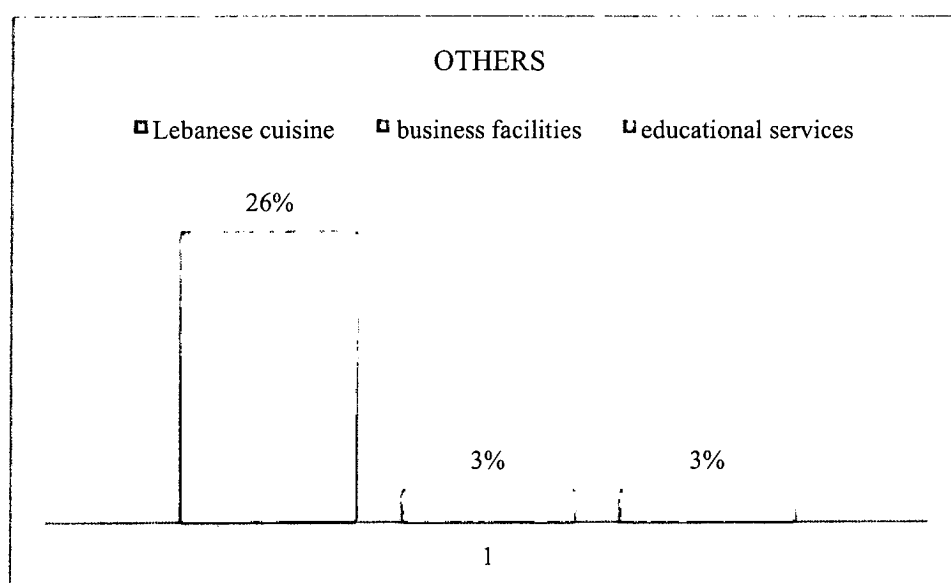
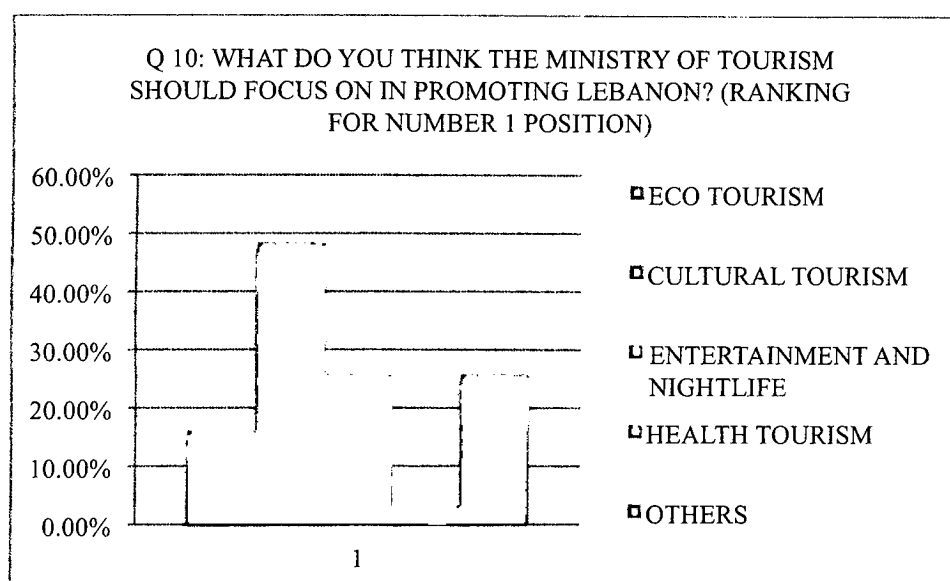
a country based on exposure to its promotion. It is becoming obvious that TV campaigns have a clear impact on tourists' perceptions and intentions and thus decisions to visit a country.



To focus on the Lebanese case, a set of tourism-based questions was asked. Tourists favored cultural tourism as the best Lebanese touristic experience and then came eco-tourism, entertainment and nightlife and a minority picked health tourism. This question gave tourists the opportunity to add other touristic elements and a

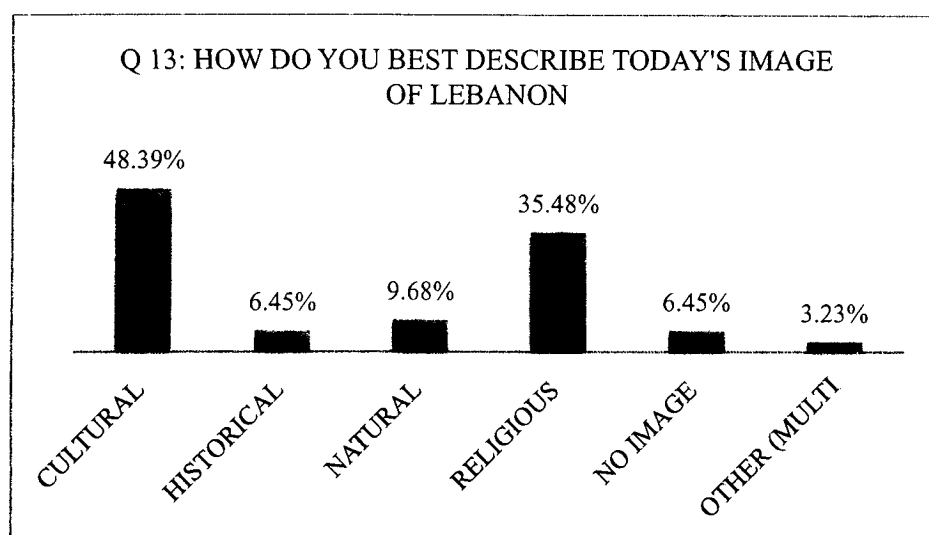
26% said that the Lebanese cuisine could be considered as the best experience, while 3% picked business facilities and educational services.

Looking at the promotional campaigns of Lebanon, there was a little emphasis on the Lebanese cuisine. However, tourists have expressed positive feedback towards the Lebanese culinary as one the best in the world. Indeed, Lebanon was rated as one of the best food destinations in the world by the Lonely Planet. According to the Lonely Planet blog, came in the 8<sup>th</sup> position among the list of the best food destinations in the world (Broadhead, 2013).



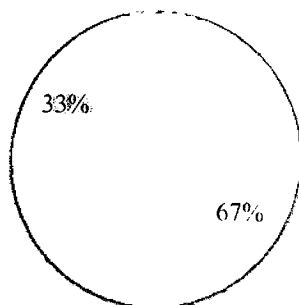
As the image of Lebanon is a primary key variable to look at, it was essential to determine the perception tourists have towards Lebanon. Forty eight percent described the image of Lebanon as cultural while 35% said it is religious and 10% reported it as natural.

It is important to note that none of the subjects have been exposed to a TV commercial of Lebanon. This reveals the weak and limited reach of the commercials, which is another obstacle for attracting new tourists.



Despite the 83% of tourists who said that the nearby revolutions had possible effects on the image of Lebanon, 67% of the subjects stated that the image of Lebanon has improved since 2005. However, the continuous violence around in the nearby countries, the direct and indirect involvement of Lebanon in these events (Hezbollah's troops, refugees etc.), and the powerless actions taken by the government to save the tourism industry, have jeopardized the image of Lebanon at one point or another.

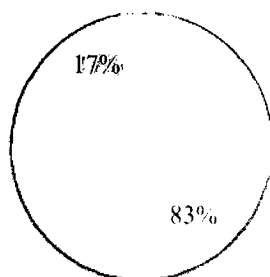
Q 19: DO YOU THINK THE IMAGE OF LEBANON HAS IMPROVED SINCE 2005?



YES

NO

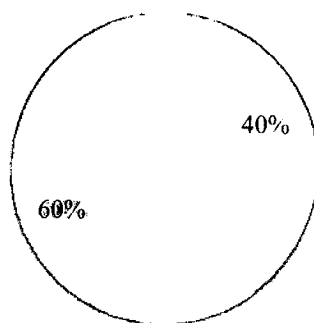
Q 21: DO YOU THINK THAT THE REVOLUTIONS HAPPENING IN THE NEARBY COUNTRIES HAVE AFFECTED THE IMAGE OF LEBANON?



YES

NO

Q 22: DO YOU THINK THAT LEBANON CAN BENEFIT FROM THESE EVENTS TO BOOST ITS TOURISM?

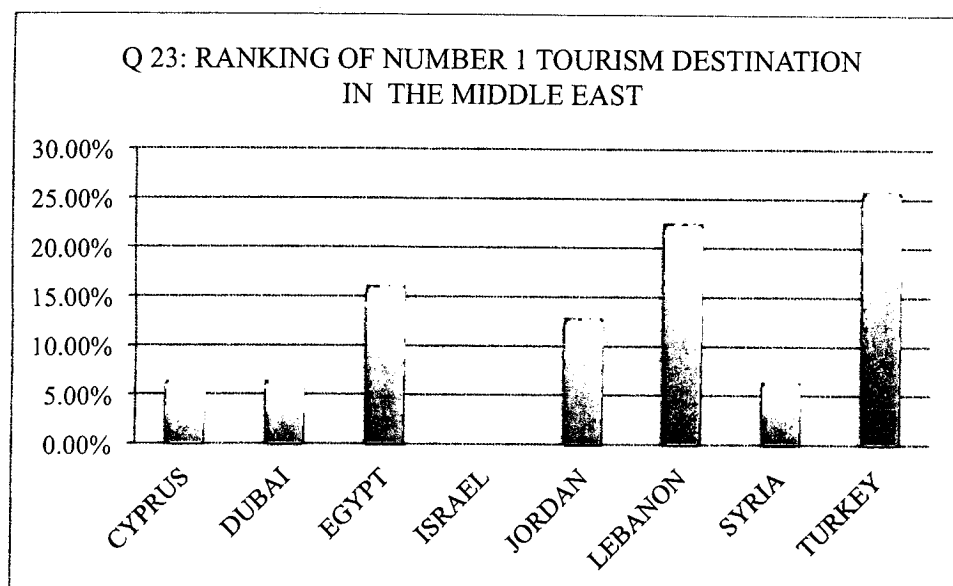


YES

NO

As a final question, that answers the research question "g", interviewees were asked to classify the rank of some of the best touristic countries in the region.

Turkey obtained the number one tourism destination while Lebanon came second. The result can be considered as optimistic and propitious because it shows the positivity that foreigners still have of Lebanon despite all the negative events that it has been facing lately.



### 3.5 Analysis and Discussion of Results

#### 3.5.1 Interviews

In the interviews with Mrs. Nada Sardouk Ghandour, Mrs. Mona Fares and Mrs. Claudia Karam, they all agreed that the Ministry's efforts are still not considered enough to create a good and solid marketing strategy for Lebanon and that is due to several factors such as the fluctuating situation of the country as well as the budget constraints that prevent the Ministry from working properly and effectively to reach tourists in their own countries. Nevertheless, they all rely on the positive image that Lebanon still has regardless of all the negative situations and which could be shown in the increase of the number of tourists in the years that were considered less risky.

The interviews with Mr. Chamaa and Mrs. Mouawad revealed the fact that television is still a powerful and effective tool and cannot be eliminated from any

further marketing and advertising strategies to promote Lebanon as a good destination brand. The interviews also uncovered the limited financial resources given to the Ministry of Tourism to promote Lebanon internationally reach potential tourists in their homes. However, it is essential today to set the major points for a solid marketing strategy that includes crisis management strategies in order to give Lebanon a consistent and unified identity.

### **3.5.2 Questionnaires**

As for the questionnaires, the results complemented the information found in the interviews. Going back to fig.1 - A conceptual model of destination branding in which Cai and Hsu (2009) set the steps for a behavioral intention, the results of the questionnaires and specially the fact that tourists are not aware at all of any TV campaign done for Lebanon and that their only knowledge about Lebanon comes through family or friends (relations) or business meetings.

These results showed that the efforts of the Ministry of Tourism in promoting Lebanon as a destination brand may not be satisfactory, even with the TV campaigns done so far, because the people who should be exposed to them are not receiving them, and thus there is less possibility to gain brand knowledge (awareness) --> Brand knowledge (cognitive or affective image) --> brand trust (expectations) --> brand loyalty (behavioral intention). Therefore it becomes harder for Lebanon to attract new potential tourists and to open up to new markets, thus as long as the TV campaigns remain local with a shy regional broadcast the problem of reaching potential tourists will remain. This problem is even among the Lebanese subjects who would sometimes remember a commercial or shots of a commercial but do not make a link to its title. Some subjects would try very hard to recall the

complete commercial. This reflects another problem in reaching the Lebanese subjects themselves.

Another model for Qu, Kim and Im (2010) in the Literature review sets the step to create an intention to revisit or recommend a particular country. This model comes as continuity to the previous one and highlights the importance of the overall image of a country and the elements that affect it. In the case of Lebanon, it is still hard to determine its cognitive, unique and affective image and thus its overall image. However, this model could be used in further studies as a starting point for creating a good marketing strategy for Lebanon by trying to stress on one of these images in order to create an overall image and thereby to attain an intention to visit, revisit or recommend.

Another model could be helpful in further studies about branding Lebanon, which is the six perspectives of a nation's image established by Fan (2008). It can be used as a guide mark to understand a new market, and therefore find a good way to reach it properly and effectively. As the objective of this research is not to create a branding strategy for Lebanon but to analyze the existing one through its TV campaigns, the assembled questionnaire for this thesis can be elaborated and applied to this model since it contains a question about nationalities, so in further studies the researcher can separate potential tourists into different market groups and applies the model to each group.

The survey's results revealed the mutual relation between creating a marketing strategy and TV campaigns. On one hand, TV campaigns need a good strategy to be more reachable and more effective and on another hand any good strategy cannot properly function without the presence of TV campaigns because people still believe in its power to influence.

## **IV - The Ministry of Tourism TV Campaigns**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Simon Anholt (2005) discussed the strategic imperative for developing nations to apply branding principles in their trade relations with the developed countries, according to him “more branded export business is most certainly a step in the right direction for an emerging country.” This argument justifies the need for both product and place branding from the perspectives of the developing countries such as Lebanon.

The rise of globalization and the collapse of international barriers in trading have created a competitive environment among companies and even countries racing to win more consumers, investors and tourists. Therefore, it is the nation’s responsibility to project the most positive image to potential investors and tourists, and also to guarantee peace and stability of investment, as well as to promise the security of life and value for money, which would likely attract tourists and foreign investments (Nworah, *Critical Perspectives On The Heart Of Africa Image Project*, 2006, p. 5).

Francesco Frangialli, the former United Nations World Trade Organization (UNWTO) Secretary-General, once expressed in Godahewa the view that modern day tourism is highly dependent on media reporting. He said so because today a vast majority of travel decisions are made by people who have never seen their intended destination first hand for themselves. Many people are travelling, making their travel decisions on their own with little or no help from tour planners.

The premise of destination advertising is that reaching target audiences with messages and images that boost awareness and interest will result in significantly more trips than would otherwise have been taken. As such, assessing the



effectiveness of the ad campaign involves identifying the actual number of tourists and their expenditures, which would not have occurred without the advertising. This is “incremental travel” – travel that can be attributed to the ad campaign – and expenditures associated with incremental travel represent the economic impact of the effort. The overall economic impact of the effort is then compared to campaign expenditures to calculate the return on investment. (Strategic Marketing & Research, Inc., August 2007, p. 2)

In Lebanon, tourism is one of the profitable sectors and contributes to 10% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with 4.3 billion dollars income in 2012 (IDAL, 2014).

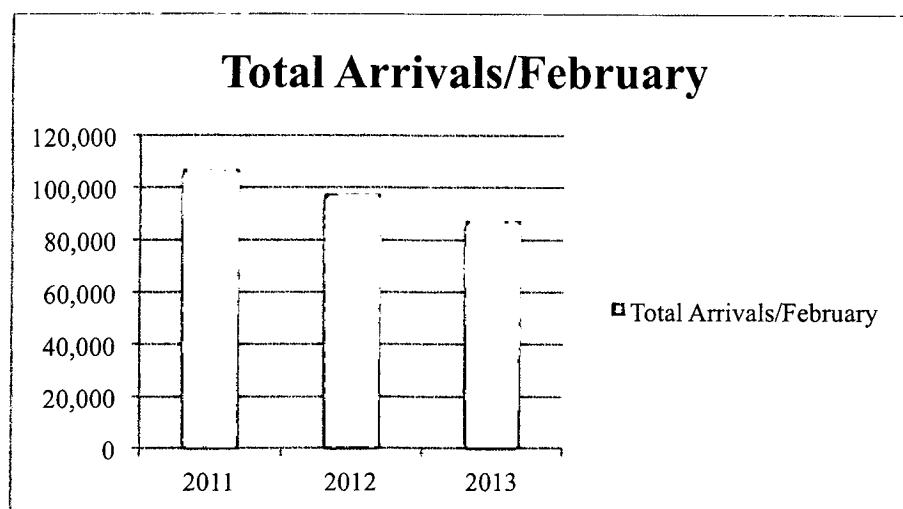
The natural beauty, nightlife, international shows and entertainment facilities gave Lebanon a positive reputation as a tourist destination among the Arab countries in specific and the world in general. No wonder that Lebanon was once called the “Switzerland of the Orient” with a lifestyle that is not found in any nearby country. Furthermore, Lebanon has more than five natural sites that are cited on the World Heritage List set by the UNESCO: Aanjar, Baalbek, Byblos, Tyre and Qadisha Valley.

A 60 minutes ride from the highest mountain peaks to the first-class beaches located on the Mediterranean sea, a nightlife that never ends all around the year, the cities and villages that combine the treasure of the past with the luxury of the present, all that and more reflect the touristic environment in Lebanon.

It is known, however, that Lebanon has witnessed several serious negative events in the past 10 years, events that jeopardized the future of the tourism industry. From the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the subsequent assassinations of many other Lebanese political leaders, the different

bombings that targeted many areas in the country, to the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel as well as several other political, security and economic problems, which all created a negative image of Lebanon and reduced the tourists to the lowest numbers in decades.

Efforts of both public and private sectors are still timid concerning the promoting of Lebanon as a competitive destination brand. In 2013, Minister Fady Abboud, launched the 50/50 campaign (50% for 50 days) in order to get back the Arab Tourists. The campaign included discounts on airfares, hotels, car rentals as well as private cars, along with special packages on restaurants and shopping. The campaign was not fully successful in achieving the expected objectives, as it is clear in the decline of the number of tourists. (see below chart).



(Ministry of Tourism, Department of Research and Documentation)

#### 4.2 Analysis of TV Commercials (2003 – 2013)

This section will analyze the TV commercial campaigns launched by the Ministry of Tourism since 2003 till 2013. For a closer idea about how some people perceive those ads, comments from YouTube were used. In addition, a one-on-one interview with Mr. Arnaud Fratani, a French citizen, and with Miss Liza Richter, a German

citizen, were conducted and aimed to knowing the foreigners' opinions and perceptions towards the TV commercials.

### **“Habbet Loulou” Video Clip and TV Commercial**

In 2003 the Ministry of Tourism launched “Habbet Loulou” (pearl) video clip including a song written by “Henri Zougheib,” a Lebanese poet. The song was composed by the well-known musician “Elias Rahbani.”

The video clip included historical, educational, business and entertainment sites showing all the touristic elements that Lebanon offers such Baalbek, Downtown, the natural reserves, the beautiful architectural and natural beauty etc. The song includes the following lyrics: “a pearl has fallen out of the sky’s tears and tell those who see it that has been painted by God... A land of civilization and a country that is a lighthouse, which is never measured by how deep it is engraved in the earth but how far its light can get... You cedars are your benchmark. Your history is your identity. Your people are proud to belong to you.”

The original video clip was then reduced into a one minute TV commercial that was aired on Lebanese TV stations. The TV commercial goes through the best natural sites in Lebanon, showing the beautiful sides of the country from its highest mountains to the beaches. Its idea is easy to understand with its simple lyrics and nice touching music. It connects the different touristic facilities together in an organized slideshow.

Being in Arabic language, the commercial is convenient for potential Arab tourists, but on the other hand, it makes it hard for millions of tourists who are not familiar with this language to understand its meaning. It is definite that any foreign tourist watching this ad can see the beautiful places but cannot understand what the song says so they cannot make the link between the lyrics and the pictures, which

decreases the effectiveness of this ad. This is exactly the point that Mr. Fratani stressed on saying. He said that he enjoyed the pictures but could not understand the song. Mr. Fratani added that this commercial is classic and it adds nothing new to the tourism in Lebanon and also misses a very important and interesting touristic element that is the Lebanese food. “Most tourists come for the food” he said, “we don’t see Lebanese food in the commercials.”



#### **“Mafi a’man men Libnein” – “Come Back” TV Commercial**

In 2006, and due to the Israeli war against Lebanon, Impact BBDO came up with a touching TV Commercial that was translated into English, thus reaching millions of immigrants and tourists around the world. Even though the commercial addressed mainly the immigrants or Lebanese people living abroad by calling them to visit Lebanon, it also communicated the idea of Lebanon as a safe place to tourists. The commercial consisted of a soft heartwarming music and people welcoming and hugging each others at Rafik Hariri International Airport, which is a familiar place to Lebanese people everywhere. The commercial wanted to show that by being with your family and loved ones, the security issues become relatively less important. Parents hugging their children, friends welcoming each other, families reunited; the “it’s good to be home” spirit pervaded the atmosphere of the commercial.

“This commercial is so good it gives me goose bumps. I love the feeling of arriving at that airport.” (aboudikabbani, 2010)

“This commercial gives me goose bumps, and definitely makes me want to be there this summer, regardless of what Israel will be threatening Lebanon with by spring of every year!” (Michael B., 2012)

Diana Noureddine from Denmark commented “When I see this video, it makes me miss Lebanon even more! I miss my family there, the warm Beirut, the beach, our summerhouse, the atmosphere, the feeling of being alive. I love Lebanon.”

This TV commercial gained wide appreciation. The Ministry of Tourism wanted to show the Lebanese immigrants how important they are for the tourism sector in Lebanon. This commercial came to confirm that message.



### **“Ups and Downs” TV Commercial**

In 2008, and due to the economic and security hardship that Lebanon faced, the Ministry of Tourism launched the “Ups and Downs” TV commercial. The commercial’s concept was to show a different meaning for “ups and downs” by showing arrows that go up to the mountain and down on the dance floor. It was a

clever idea that turned the fluctuating situation of Lebanon into a positive one. But once again the Ministry falls in the Arabic Language mistake, which makes it hard for non-Arabs to understand the message. A foreigner, like Fratani, was able to see all the touristic elements of the commercial without comprehending the meaning of the arrows or the message in general. So it is another commercial that can be used regionally without reaching potential Western tourists.



#### **“Sa’abi Raja’a Men Libnein” – “It’s Hard to Leave Lebanon” TV Commercial**

In 2009, the Ministry committed the same mistake by launching a TV Commercial in Arabic Language, but this time the idea was easier to understand because the language did not affect the content and the commercial also contains a short English part. “Sa’abi Raja’a Men Libnein” or “It’s Hard to Leave Lebanon” commercial had a funny concept. It shows different people being called to their planes while they still enjoy their vacation in Lebanon, and at the end of the commercial a man stands at the door of the airport but does not enter; he grabs his things and goes back to go on with his vacation. The commercial’s idea is catchy and original representing different touristic features in a humorous way, dumping all the “cliché” ideas that sometimes the Ministry falls in.

“Whenever I watch this ad, it just makes me smile, and I miss Lebanon so much, because it is so true, no one likes to leave Lebanon after they've gone there” said a commenter who watched the commercial on YouTube. Another commenter compared the music used in the commercial to the Greek music and considered

that such resemblance is due to “the original geographic location of Lebanon as a connection point between Greece and the Arab World.”

“The commercial is easy to understand, funny and has a good idea. However, it is not oriented to foreigners. It is mostly addressed to Lebanese citizens. It would be better to show Baalbek instead of the Jacuzzi because as a tourist I won’t be interested in that,” Fratani said.

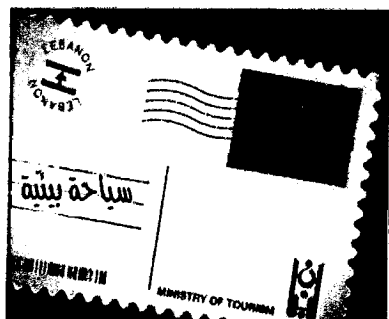


### **“365 Days of Tourism” TV Campaign**

In 2010 just like in 2003, the Ministry of Tourism launched a video clip called “365 Days of Tourism” and that was minimized into a one minute TV commercial. The commercial was meant to show different touristic sites in Lebanon that are open and available to tourists all around the year. The commercial can be considered as clear and general, it had no funny or emotional concept just a direct cognitive message.

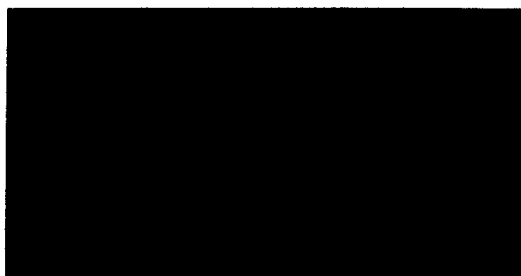
Taha El Baba, a YouTube commenter, criticized the commercial for not mentioning Tripoli as a major touristic location although it contains different historical and cultural sites. This comment reflects the emotions of some people who feel that their hometown is being neglected by the Ministry of Tourism as an

attractive touristic site. This concern should be put at the disposal of the Ministry of Tourism so that it takes it into consideration.



### **“It’s the Lebanon Blues” TV Campaign**

In 2011, the Ministry of Tourism went for something different. It created a set of TV commercials for viewers, with a new the concept. “It’s the Lebanon Blues” goes beyond the classic slideshow of pictures into exploring the minds of tourists. The TV commercials showed three different tourists with different nationalities (American, British and French) suffering from the Lebanon Blues after visiting Lebanon on their vacations. When they went back home and asked about the time they spent, they remember all the nice things they experienced, and they no longer feel at ease because the time they had was so great they could not forget. This commercial was meant to reflect the Lebanese experience from outdoor activities to nightlife and shopping, which the tourists fully enjoyed.







The importance of this campaign is the opposite opinions that people had about it. On one hand, the campaign caused anger and frustration among a group of Lebanese women who expressed their annoyance in a letter to the Ministry of Tourism, in which they raised questions about the image of Lebanon as a sex tourism destination and the sexist use of women in the commercials.

The letter is summarized as follow:

*“Dear Ministry of Tourism,*

*We are a group of female Lebanese citizens, a group that has existed for more than ten years, and for some time we've been experiencing continuous insults and humiliation as women whether from video clips, advertisements, and in all kinds of media ... But what we don't expect or accept is the latest commercials published by the Ministry of Tourism, which uses Lebanese women's bodies to “pull” tourists and the [Lebanese] diaspora to the country. Is it acceptable for the Ministry of Tourism to promote Lebanon as the “cabaret of the Middle East” to tourists? Can't we revive tourism without selling women's bodies? Dear Ministry, how can anyone accept our bodies becoming the goal and target of the lust of the arriving spenders? How are we supposed to understand that “Lebanon Blues” is connected to our naked bodies? How can the Ministry of Tourism promote a message to the whole world that Lebanon is a country which sells its women for the sake of tourists?” (Al Khatib, 2011)*

“I have to say that this is the worst ad I've ever seen. The author focused on people, not on the place. I don't get it” (Yola270, 2013). “It is a terrible and clearly sexist, the ad says nothing about Lebanon itself: the five seconds collage at the end is too short and very poorly done” (Jjouney, 2012).

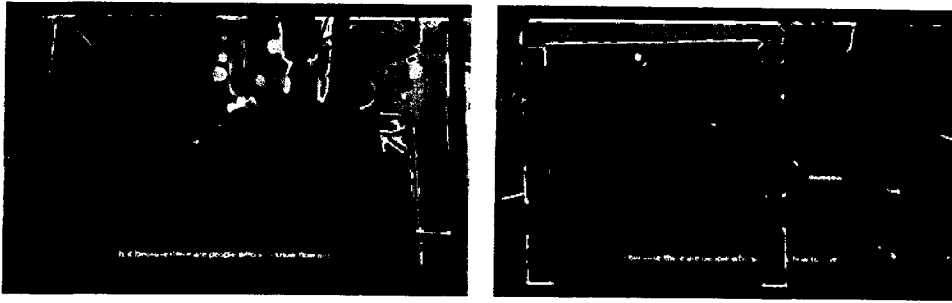
Those are examples, as posted on YouTube, of the negative reactions that the campaign has created.

On the other hand, some people liked the campaign's new and creative idea in promoting Lebanon since it got out of the usual "cliché" touristic elements. Here are some of the comments posted on YouTube "It is a really a nice commercial." "This ad is not sexist. It shows how awesome Lebanese women are that not even foreign women can compete."

In the interview with Fratani, he showed positive feelings about the idea of the commercial, "the idea is good but it was better to show that these people are living in a worse situation in their home countries like showing the crowded metro in Paris or people running in the rain during winter to reflect the negative sides of these countries instead of giving them a favorable image because we see them in good restaurant, big companies and nice bars. Besides there is a very short time for the pictures of Lebanon, which makes it hard to know the touristic facilities that the ad was trying to communicate."

Although it is not among the discussed commercials, "It's All in Lebanon" got Fratani's attention and admiration. He said it is very interesting, smart and straight to the point. He considered it as the best among all the other commercials.

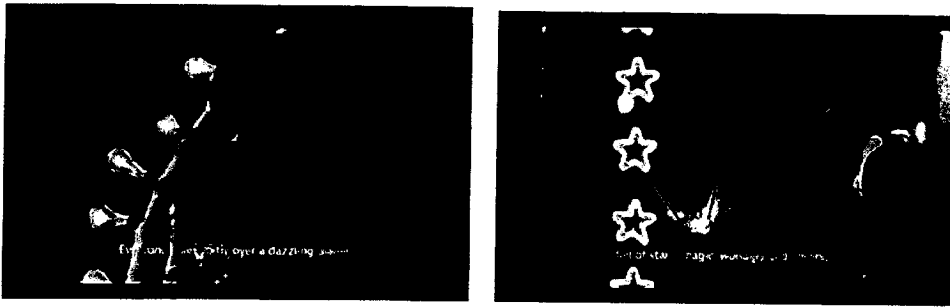
In 2012, "Smile Lebanon" TV campaign was the first campaign to be aired on several Pan Arab TV Networks. In other words, it was the only campaign that reached its target at home. The commercial was meant to promote the 50/50 campaign that took place during February 2013. The commercials reflected a modern spirit with its English language and English subtitles, the costumes, the music and the direction. In one commercial, there was an emphasis on the emotional bonds that relate the Lebanese people to their country.



The message of the commercial was translated into the following words: "What is the secret that keeps this small planet going? Strange how it never lost its spark. It is because there are people who still know how to love and hope for a better tomorrow? It is because there are people who still know how to smile? Our smile changes everything."

This commercial had a relatively positive feedback. People liked the emotional bonds it tried to create by showing different types of love from family to country. The music went well with the entire idea, giving the commercial a cozy and close to the heart atmosphere. "The campaign plays on one very pure idea that we are a population that overcomes difficulties and keeps smiling. The visuals of the campaign proved to have nothing sloppy. The art direction was well thought of, the coloring, the acting, the rhythm, seem to be almost a full package." (Admin-I, 2012)

The second commercial addressed foreigners by showing them the touristic facilities Lebanon offers. The commercial took place on an airplane when the hostesses appear like cabaret show girls from the 90s and started to sing and dance and show different touristic services like nightlife, sports (ski), food and fashion. The audience or the passengers were enjoying the show eagerly.



Unfortunately this commercial, unlike the first one, had a negative feedback accusing the Lebanese people of imitating the West (language, clothes and music). It fell again in the clichés of using women to promote the country to attract tourists. “As much as we loved how the first campaign had no ‘tourism’ clichés, the second fails to remember that we are promoting a country not a cheap art direction with a more like ‘decorated’ cabaret!” (Admin-I, 2012). “I do not like this commercial. It feels too artificial” (ohan95, 2013). “Some Lebanese are desperate to be accepted by the west, so they copy them, and imitate them” (Cyber J., 2013).

In the online interview with Lisa Richter, a German citizen, she mentioned that she never went to Lebanon or knew someone who did. However, she did some research about it and she was surprised with its history and beauty. She was also awakened by the effects that the civil war had on tourism. Furthermore, Richter was aroused by the beauty, modernity and openness in Lebanon but her only worry was the security situation. She said she could never go to such place surrounded with war zones but she wished that this situation ends so that she can visit Lebanon because it seemed interesting. Regarding the commercials, Mrs. Richter showed no interest in any of them mainly because of Language problems, except “it’s all in Lebanon” TV commercial. In her opinion, it was very appealing to make such comparison especially that few people know that Lebanon has all these facilities. Finally, Richter stressed that people in Germany have no idea how modern and

western Lebanon looks like. Germany is just an example, but this reflects the weak presence of media and promotional elements about Lebanon in the world.

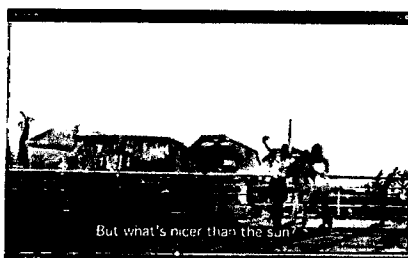
### **“Don’t go to Lebanon” TV Commercial**

In 2013, the Ministry launched a new TV commercial: “Don’t go to Lebanon.” The name itself created a fuss among people: some liked it, others did not. “I loved it but the title is shocking. I would have preferred it to be, “They say don’t go to Lebanon,” it would have sounded more appealing.” (Salim Mansour, 2013). “I disagree, the title catches your attention which is the first step to successful advertising. Of course once you watch the video you realize that the title is sarcastic,” said another commenter on YouTube.

As for the commercial, the new part was using two celebrities Assi El Hellani and Yara, who are popular among Lebanese and nearby Arab countries as well as Lebanese immigrants around the world. The commercial used the emotional touch through the music and the scenes. It did not ask people to visit Lebanon and it did not compare it with other countries. It gave some familiar negative sayings a more positive touch. “They say don’t stay too long in the sun, but what’s nicer than the sun ... they say don’t eat too much, but what’s better than food ... they say don’t stay out late, but what’s wilder than a night out ... they say avoid arguments, but what’s wiser than democracy ... They say stay away from Lebanon, but what’s greater than Lebanon.”

The scenes showed different places in Lebanon, such as the river, the beach, the mountains and the nightlife. It focused on turning negativity into positivity and also stressed the family and friendship bonds that distinguish Lebanon from other countries. Some comments about the commercial came positively “The Lebanese Ministry of Tourism simply made a commercial that reminds us of the things that

make us true Lebanese, and it is a beautiful one.” While others criticized the use of celebrities, “It was great until I realized its Yara and Assi Hellani. No offense to them but I think it would be much better if they uses an average Lebanese guy and girl that can really relate to us.”



### 4.3 TV Campaigns From Arab Countries

#### Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority commissioned this commercial through TBWA\RAAD Advertising agency in Abu Dhabi. The spot reflects the spirit of Abu Dhabi under the theme 'Be Still' and positions it on the global tourism and travel destination map. The advert has won a Bronze Lion at Cannes International Advertising Festival, in recognition of excellence in copywriting. (Macleod, 2010).



*“Be still, so you may hear the dreams of the people below ... Nature rewards the inquisitive mind in a land where impossible is defined and ignored...”*

Along with a soft music, this commercial features many of the intriguing locations within the Abu Dhabi such as the oasis city of Al Ain and the Jebel Hafeet mountain; the Yas Marina Circuit and The Yas Hotel on Yas Island, the luxurious Emirates Palace Hotel, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, and the majestic desert of the Empty Quarter.

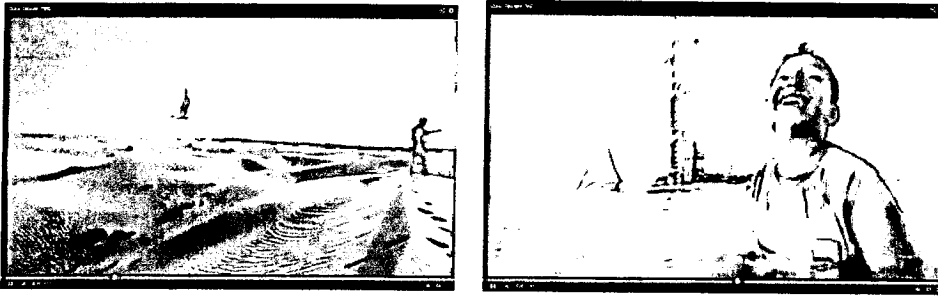
What is attractive about this commercial is the beautiful blend of cultural and modern aspects of Abu Dhabi. The commercial itself is modern in terms of its direction, music or the English voice over. However, it did not eliminate the identity of Abu Dhabi as an Arab country that appreciates its history.

### **Dubai**

“Welcome to the city of captivating contrasts” is the motto used in Dubai’s Tourism TV commercial. This motto was translated into well-directed scenes that shows and focuses on these contrasts. Dubai did not let go its history of being a purely Arab country, yet in the commercial it added to its value by presenting itself as the city of modernism. Using one TV spot, producers were able to combine the deserts with skyscrapers, oriental lifestyle with fancy hotels and up-to-date activities.

The music used is a continuity of the message of contrasts because it is oriental with an international touch.

It is another simple commercial that shows no creativity in the idea but in the directing and video production. A remarkable observation in the commercial is promoting Dubai as a “ski” destination with its indoor skiing facilities while the country is equatorial and has a desert climate.



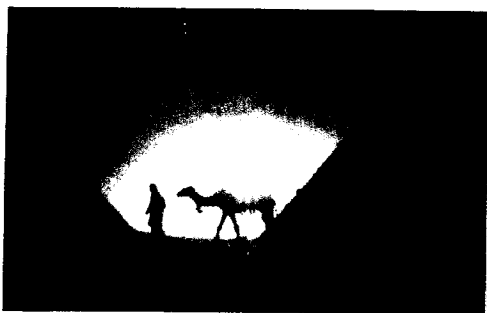
## Egypt

“A land where the sun is sacred - today it offers the most precious treasure: their sun,” is the motto of an international commercial for Egypt that uses oriental mixed music along with scenes about the different experiences that tourists can have.

For years, the incarnation of "brand Egypt" has been expressed through an image of two cupped hands holding a vermilion sun, with the tagline "Nothing Compares". The new identity encapsulates the idea "Where It All Begins," and is marked by more exquisite and expressive images and visualizations. "Nothing Compares" focused on Egypt's historical allure for tourists, while "Where It All Begins" goes beyond that to combine the significance of the country's current cultural contributions and highlight its place in history. Furthermore, the commercial does not refer to an exact timeline and states that Egypt is the starting point of all times. It is an intriguing imagery providing a deeper fascination to the country, and engendering pride among Egyptian people. (Gale, 2010)

Egypt's history speaks for itself and one could believe that Egypt needs no advertising or promoting. However, the Egyptian authorities understand the value of good media, therefore they keep reminding tourists of their country to uphold their presence in the competition.





## Jordan

With a mix of International and Oriental music, Future Vision Productions produced Jordan Tourism Promotion Commercial. The spot promotes tourism in Jordan through revealing the country's historical sites, culture and heritage. It depicts Jordan as a destination for wellness, family vacations, fun activities, shopping and great food. (Jordan Tourism TV Commercial, 2011)

The commercial is simple and direct to the point but it has nothing new or creative about it. However, research showed that Jordan remains an attractive touristic destination for many tourists around the world. This could be because Jordan was able to maintain its image as a stable and safe touristic destination despite all the trouble happening in the nearby countries.



## 4.4 Lebanon the Destination / the Brand: Recommendation for Creating a New Image for Lebanon

Hedberg (in Bennett & Savani, 2003) states that "place re-branding could be implemented to revive a pre-existing, but outdated, place image, in order to make it more relevant to the market". The benefits of re-branding lie in the creation of

opportunities by the new or revived brand image. This could assist tourists to acquire the meaning and the value of the destination in terms of what the brand stands for and what makes it unique and special (Lewis & Chamber, 2000).

Re-branding brings about awareness and helps to reinforce the brand positioning and desired points of difference. It acts as an image builder and carries meaning and relevance to the tourists (Zeithami & Bitner, 2000).

All these reasons make it essential for Lebanon to have a branding strategy. It would contribute to build a more favorable image and assist to establish a crisis management plan both of which would help attract new tourists and keep the already existing markets interested.

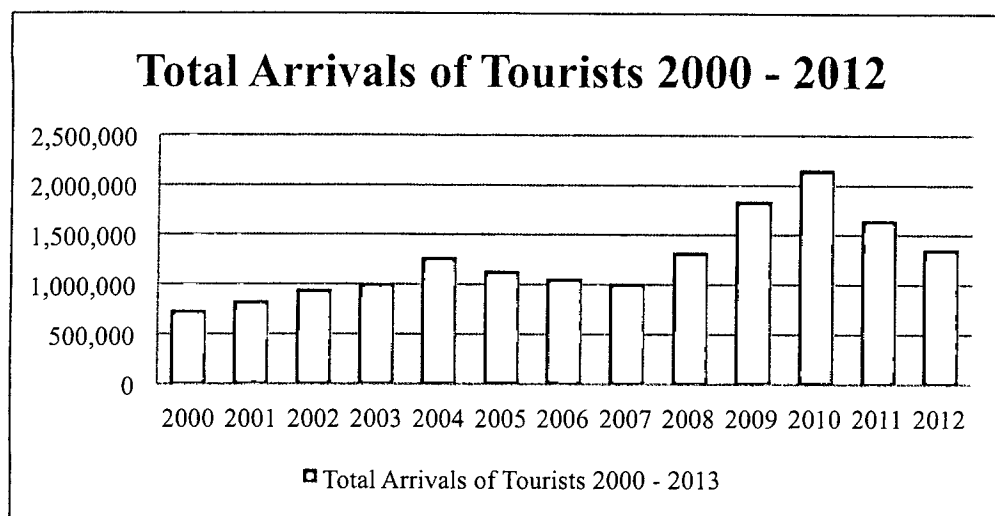
When talking about Lebanon, one cannot but go back to the year 1975 when the civil war occurred. Before that date Lebanon was one of the best tourism destinations in the Middle East. Movies from around the region were shot on its territory because of its beautiful landscapes and architecture. Beirut was a lighthouse that spread its shine to the world filled with different kinds of activities and festivals.

During various conversations with some employees at the Ministry of tourism, they expressed a kind of nostalgia for the old days when the Ministry of Tourism only dealt with paper work while the promotion of Lebanon was set by the National Council of Tourism. The Board had an independent budget and a team of tourism and marketing professionals who managed all the promotional activities for Lebanon: from creating commercials to setting and participating in conferences and exhibitions. After the civil war, the National Board of Tourism was joined to the Ministry of Tourism under the name "Department of Tourism Promotion."

Employees claim that this action caused the Board to lose its effectiveness and

productivity specially that the budget was also merged with that of the Ministry. Nowadays several tourism projects are rejected due to budget constraints, which led to a state of despair among employees who feel that their skills are not being well appreciated.

The chart below shows the total arrivals of Tourists from 2000 till 2013. The unstable numbers the fluctuating situation of Tourism in Lebanon.



(Ministry of Tourism, Department of Research and Documentation)

The year 2000 shows the least number with around 700,000 arrivals, while the year 2010 shows the highest with more than 2.000.000 visitors. After the year 2005 the number went down due to the security situation and the assassinations that occurred and in 2007 the number kept going down due to the 2006 war between Hizbollah and Israel. However, the growth in the number of arrivals during the years 2009 and 2011, that were relatively safe, clearly proves the relation between the political and security situation and their effect on the tourism industry. The question raised here that could be studied in further research is: "Do political and security matters affect tourism to an extent that setting a marketing plan seems ineffective?"

Or would the presence of a solid marketing strategy that includes a crisis management plan actually be beneficial?” The research in this thesis requires the creation of a solid marketing and advertising plan for two reasons. First, it creates a favorable image for the country, and second, it protects the tourism sector from serious downfalls even during sudden negative political and security occurrences.

## V - Conclusion

The research showed that promoting Lebanon as a destination brand has not improved for a long time, and that is due to several reasons: the unpredictable political and security situation, the budget constraints and the absence of the needed studies to come up with a reliable strategy are among the main causes. This resulted with a weak presence for Lebanon as a tourism destination, mainly in Western countries as shown in the survey results. Tourists, in the sample, are unaware of the TV campaigns of Lebanon, and the two subjects who were exposed to them were not satisfied with the commercials' effectiveness. The Ministry of Tourism has not found yet the right means to trigger the tourists' attention to visit Lebanon. Some tourists said it would be better to promote the Lebanese cuisine in addition to Baalbek and other historical sites; yet Lebanese cuisine is rarely present in TV commercials.

The Lebanese citizens in the sample, on the other hand, also criticized many TV commercials, whether regarding the content of their messages or the way they were conveyed. Some commercials, they said, were seen as sexist due to the promotion of women instead of tourism.

The research also showed the importance of such strategies in creating and maintaining a favorable brand image of a country. Many nations have already embraced the new techniques in destination branding and translated it into serious steps to create their identities and maintain their images. It is a fierce competition where countries are racing to grab the highest numbers of tourists by offering them all the possible touristic facilities they have in a 30 or 60 seconds TV commercial.

This thesis can be seen as a starting point for the people who are interested and concerned with branding Lebanon as tourism destination. Both public and private

sectors can benefit from the research done and information found in the thesis specially regarding identifying the steps of the branding process and the image creation.

It is also important to stress on the power of the Internet to compliment the branding process. Through their websites, countries today have the ability to reach their potential tourists anywhere and at any time.

### **5.1 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

The Ministry of Tourism lacks basic research and studies concerning the branding strategies for Lebanon, which have put some limitations to this thesis. However, it has also triggered for more thorough effort to assist the Ministry in the marketing and advertising process.

Another major limitation of this thesis is the sample size of tourists used. Originally, the research planned to have two hundred fifty tourists but the year 2013 was extremely problematic for the industry in Lebanon due to several internal and external political and security problems. This also made the transportation process in Lebanon a risky one, so this research focused only on some of the touristic regions that were relatively safe to reach.

While writing this thesis, many bombings took place in different Lebanese regions, which reflected the bad political and security situation that deeply affected the tourism sector and the number of tourists who visited Lebanon. Therefore, this research stresses the importance of creating a crisis management strategy to help the tourism sector survive during any occurring incidents and to retain a favorable image of Lebanon throughout negative times.

A future study should have an in-depth analysis of the psychological needs and expectations of the potential tourists. This would facilitate the communication

process by knowing how to reach the targeted tourists and what message they should receive.

New commercials should use the English language as a first step and avoid the clichés of pictures slideshow that have no theme or concept. A commercial should focus on one market to convey the right messages for its potential tourists (e.g. focusing on culinary tourism for Europeans). Once a campaign addresses specific markets and sends them the right message, it would become easy to attract its potential tourists and to create a positive word-of-mouth among them. (See appendix III as suggested creative ads)

Finally, this thesis, though studied several TV commercials yet it has not used a scientific content analysis research. It would be useful in the future to use a comparative content analysis research between Lebanon's advertising campaigns and other countries in the MENA region.

## **5.2 Personal Opinion**

Throughout the research, I have realized that Lebanon still has a long way to become a good destination brand. Its reputation is volatile and spontaneous. It is not created from a solid branding or marketing strategy but so far this situation has not been that bad. However, the entire region is experiencing armed revolutions, which have negative effects on the tourism sector, especially that several countries have warned their citizens from visiting Lebanon.

A crisis management strategy for Lebanon has become crucial. "Good crisis management is on one hand about the ability of organizations to learn from experience (that of others as well as their own) and on another hand about the ability and willingness of a lead organization to undertake the roles of researching and then disseminating the information which is required for effective re-planning"

(Prideaux, 2007, p. 26). The World Tourism Organization Network (UNTWO) has developed, planned and implemented crisis management systems that will reduce the impact of and assist in the recovery from crises. The projects include measures to facilitate international travel, supports members in identifying and reducing global and local risks related to tourism, coordination with the United Nations system, and also improve capacity of members to develop, plan and implement crisis management systems (World Tourism Organization Network). This approach is good to recover from crises, yet for it to succeed security and stability are to be accomplished before any solution can be implemented.

Furthermore, it is important for the Ministry of Tourism, in any new branding strategy for Lebanon, to learn from the mistakes of the previous commercials and come up with ideas about international concepts. Both public and private sector are called to work together and join their efforts with the Lebanese immigrants around the world to create a convenient marketing strategy that would lead to a long-term destination brand called Lebanon.



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## Appendix I

### Interviews

#### **Mrs. Nada Sardouk Ghandour - Director General of the Ministry of Tourism**

- **What is the Ministry's long-term strategy for the promotion of Lebanon?**

It is our aim to keep a positive image of Lebanon through consistent messages about its natural, cultural and historical beauty. In our strategy we try to stress on the "stable" touristic sites and services such as cultural tourism, eco-tourism, nightlife and entertainment tourism. But the deviating situation of the country makes it hard to focus on just one strategy, because sometimes we face sudden events that we try to overcome through our campaigns (e.g. 2006 war, political conflicts etc.). Being in an unstable country makes it difficult to create a one stable strategy, so the biggest aim is to absorb any negative events and keep a positive image of the country to lessen the losses.

- **What are the critical factors for the successful branding of Lebanon as a tourist destination?**

It is important for us to maintain a positive image of Lebanon to keep it among the highly liked destinations in the Middle East. We need to stay in the competition using power and resources otherwise Lebanon loses its biggest asset "tourism." We aim to bring back the Arab's interests and to gain the west's attention. We count on our culture's treasures, our natural beauty and our love for life and entertainment to grab as many tourists as possible. It is our goal to make Lebanon a country where anyone and everyone can enjoy and live a nice experience. Those are the factors we rely on to improve the image of Lebanon as a tourist destination. Another very important factor is the big number of immigrants that Lebanon has worldwide. Those groups don't just create a word of mouth advertising in the different corners of the world but they are also an essential touristic asset that contribute to the improvement and revival of the tourism sector. This is why it is always important for us to keep our immigrants in mind and in the advertising we create.

- **What are the major obstacles that the Ministry faces when promoting Lebanon?**

As I previously mentioned, one of the most critical factors, if not the most critical one, is the unstable situation of the country. This is making our job more difficult than it already is and sometimes it demolishes the beautiful results we aim to get. Another factor is the lack of financial and human resources. The human part has been dealt with now that we have new and young members among our employees, whom we count on to move on with our mission of creating a beautiful image for the country. Another critical issue is the rise of security matters with all the crimes and kidnappings happening in the country. This gives a very bad image and reputation for our country. We try to overcome it by creating campaigns that always reflect the good side of Lebanon. Besides, it is all the ministries duty and not just the Ministry of Tourism to lift Lebanon to a higher and better level. We need a better transportation and traffic system, better infrastructure, and so on. The tourism

sector will always be at stake as long as it is related to external influencers such as security matters. But as Ministry of Tourism we make continuous efforts to stabilize the tourism sector from breaking down and to protect the country's image among potential tourists.

- **What is the most suitable image that could be employed in branding Lebanon as a tourist destination?**

Lebanon at this stage cannot have one single image, due to the different touristic elements it has. Whether it was cultural tourism or eco tourism or nightlife tourism, they all represent Lebanon and reflect its reality. We are even in the process of advertising new elements such as food tourism, medical tourism, educational tourism, as well as religious tourism.

- **What is the best TV commercial made for Lebanon so far?**  
It's "all in Lebanon", of course.

**Mrs. Mona Haddad Fares - Director of the Promotion department in the Ministry of Tourism**

- **How do you describe the present image of Lebanon as a tourist destination?**

Lebanon has a diverse image, which has benefited from such as its well-known historical tourism for a long time ago. It also benefits from natural and eco-tourism with many natural reserves that attract thousands of tourists every year. There is also religious tourism, weddings, events and conferences planning tourism, nightlife tourism, and health tourism.

- **How effective can TV campaigns be if they were launched on local TVs only? Is there any plan to go International?**

Many campaigns were launched on International Networks such as CNN, Euro News and Euro Sports, which means that Lebanon is present for about 20.000.000 immigrants and potential tourists around the world. So, yes TV campaigns are still effective as long as the viewer is still a receiver and that TV remains a big part of people's lives worldwide.

- **Are the efforts of Ministry enough to create a positive and consistent image of Lebanon?**

Efforts are never enough in the image-making domain. But we are trying to maintain our efforts, even with the budget constraints, in order to keep a positive image of Lebanon.

- **Is the tourism sector in Lebanon able to survive with all the events happening around the country? How negative are these events affecting to the image of Lebanon as a tourism destination and is there a way to turn that negativity into benefit?**

Absolutely yes because when you create an image it remains. Besides, some of the constraints that happened were political more than security-related reasons. But Lebanon has already left its mark and when conditions get better we will increase our promotional campaigns in those countries that boycotted Lebanon.

I think it is interesting to inform you that new markets show no interest in Lebanon, as for the old markets they already love this country and will never forget it and they will be reminded with it once the circumstances get better.

- **What is the strategy adopted by the Ministry of Tourism in order to enhance the image of Lebanon?**

Our strategy aims to 1) develop and maintain our old markets in order to keep interest in our country, 2) increase our efforts on immigrants markets, which is an essential market with around 20.000.000 Lebanese spread around the world, and 3) work on opening new "friendly" markets.

- **Do you believe that the Ministry is ready to go to the Cyber world (Internet) in its promotion instead of the traditional TV Campaigns?**

Of course, and this is already happening through the development of the Ministry's website so that it becomes more salient with the new technologies that bring a new thing everyday. We also work on improving the social network facilities to be up-to-date with the technological progress. And let me add that the Ministry's website has existed since the last decade (1995) and today it is being developed to become more flexible and acceptable for anything that is new.

## **Mrs. Claudia Karam - Head of the Division of Production in the Ministry of Tourism**

- **What are the actions done by the Ministry so far to promote a good image of Lebanon? How effective these images are?**

In 1999 ➡ Temperature Campaign

In 2001 ➡ It's All In Lebanon TV Campaign + Local Awareness Campaign about Tourism

In 2002 ➡ Wadih El Safi TV Commercial

In 2003 ➡ "Habbet Loulou" Video Clip

In 2006 ➡ There's no safer place TV Commercial

In 2008 ➡ Ups and Downs TV Campaign

In 2009 ➡ It's Hard to Leave Lebanon TV Campaign

In 2010 ➡ 365 Days of Tourism TV Campaign

In 2011 ➡ It's the Lebanon Blues TV Campaign

In 2013 ➡ Smile Lebanon TV Campaign that was the first campaign to be aired on several Pan Arab TV Networks.

All these TV Campaigns were aimed to create a positive image of Lebanon in creative way; some were funny and others were more emotionally touching, and I am sure that they were able to create the image we needed and convey the required message.

- **Is there any research done to measure the effectiveness of the TV campaigns done by the Ministry?**

Unfortunately not, but today there is more effort to keep up-to-date measurements of the effectiveness of the TV Campaigns YouTube is one of these methods.

- **Is there a well-known, clear and solid marketing strategy to improve the image of Lebanon?**

No, there might be some studies that were done independently by researchers or academics but the Ministry of Tourism does not follow any clear marketing strategy in promoting the image of Lebanon.

- **Are the TV campaigns broadcasted on international TV networks or just Lebanon? If only local, Why not going international?**

All these campaigns were launched on the Local TV stations that happen to have International broadcasting as well. But, except for "Smile Lebanon" campaign, no other campaign was aired on International Networks and that was due to budget constraints.

- **Is Lebanon able to compete with other destinations, mainly the Middle Eastern ones, with its present situation?**

Of course, Lebanon is a popular country due to its geographic location, historical sites and hospitality. All this makes Lebanon a demanded destination for people looking for a new experience.



- **How many TV commercials have been produced for Lebanon in the past 10 years**

Around 12 TV Campaigns, video clips and documentaries

- **How does your department decide on TV promotions? Who is involved in the production process? What criteria are used before starting to produce commercials?**

It depends on the material given by the some advertising agencies in the private sector. It also depends on the events taking place in country as well as the circumstances that sometimes push themselves into the TV Commercials.

- **Is the Ministry aware and up-to-date with the new branding and marketing techniques used in promoting countries?**

Yes, in the Ministry we are aware of these updates through the international marketing and advertising agencies that we work with. This year we cooperated with Marta group, which is an International Marketing Company, for our PR Campaign in Brazil.

**Mrs. Nayla Mouawad - Corporate Communications Manager at ImpactBBDO**

- **What are the TV Campaigns created by Impact BBDO for the Ministry of Tourism in Lebanon? (From 2001 till present day)**

It's all in Lebanon ad (2001) — Wadih Safi ad (2002) – Airport ad (2006) – Ups and downs ad (2008) - It's hard to leave Lebanon (2009) - Gemmayzeh/noise ad (2010) – 365 days of Tourism (created in 2003 and recreated in 2010) – It's the Lebanon blues (2011) – Don't go to Lebanon (2013)

- **How is the idea born and created? What elements do the creative team use to come up with each idea?**

It is mostly the result of teamwork but sometimes one comes up with an idea, he could be an employee or creative director, so we sit down all together in a brainstorming session to discuss it and improve it until we approve it. Usually we get a brief from the company (the Ministry in this case) with all the requirements needed. For example, they ask us that we want an awareness campaign or an ad that addresses particular people or holds particular message so we focus on that matter.

- **Does the political and security situation affect the content of the ads? How?**

Absolutely. "Don't go to Lebanon" and "come back to Lebanon" TV commercials were meant to deal with an urgent situation. The occurring turbulence that happen every now and then jeopardize tourism seasons and specially summer. So in the content of the ads we try to show a different face for Lebanon and send a message that despite the danger there is always something good about this country that is worth visiting.

The ads must answer specific needs: 1) It is a safe place, 2) it is worth vising and 3) it is an interesting destination. These needs must be present in the message we are sending to viewers in order to convince them to come. This way, and despite all the urgent crises we can still be in the competition among the Middle East and Gulf area.

- **In your opinion what is the best TV campaign done so far for Lebanon?**

It is important to say that "it's hard to leave Lebanon" campaign won the silver medal at the Golden Gate City Awards in 2010. But in my personal opinion, the best ad so far is "don't go to Lebanon" because it had the perfect mix between high production values, great direction, two key stars and great music that matches perfectly the emotional value. It is also interesting that we didn't see the cliché of using Lebanese women and we replaced that with added value we love and beautiful scenes of live lifestyles.

- **In your opinion what was the hardest period of time that Lebanon witnessed since 2003 and somehow affected its image and thus advertising?**

I believe that following 2006 Lebanon has faced so many unpleasant events, which made it hard for us to promote for it as a safe destination. But we always managed

to show a different side for Lebanon, a good side that sometimes the media don't pay attention to.

- **Did Impact BBDO ever measure the effectiveness of the TV Commercials done for the Ministry of Lebanon?**

We are going into that direction more deeply nowadays. With the rise of social media we are now able to know people's reaction very easily. In few minutes we determine the number of likes and dislikes, number of sharing, and also to know the comments about the ad. This new trend of YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and so on has facilitated the measuring process for us.

"Don't go to Lebanon" commercial gained around 463,000 views within two months, which is considered very promising.

- **Do you believe that TV Campaigns still effective in reaching potential tourists or it is the "online" era?**

Definitely. Both channels are essential for the success and any campaign as they are complementary if you can say. I know that due to some budget constraints the Ministry of Tourism is not being able to go International. However, the last campaign "don't go to Lebanon" was aired on regional stations and also online banners were made on Facebook for a better exposure. Online paid media is less expensive with high numbers of viewers, which makes it very effective alternative in any upcoming campaign.

## **Mr. Tamer Al Chamaa - Finance Director at GAA Marta Consulting**

- **What is GAA Marta Consulting? What is it responsible of?**

Marta Consulting is based in Dubai, Madrid, and Los Angeles; we do Tourism Development, Country Representation, and Event Management. We are responsible of promoting and representing Lebanon worldwide

- **When did the cooperation between Marta & the Ministry of Tourism start? Since then what were the major accomplishments concerning the promotion of Lebanon?**

The Cooperation between us started in June 2012.

Here are some of The Accomplishments:

- Participation in most of the exhibitions and travel fares worldwide
- PR campaigns in attractive markets such as; Brazil, Russia, GCC. Etc.
- Fam Trips to Lebanon
- Press Trips to Lebanon.
- Road shows to attractive markets
- Workshops in Beirut and abroad.
- Advertising campaigns.

- **How do you describe today's image of Lebanon and what do you think can or should be done to enhance it?**

Everybody likes to come and visit Lebanon; there is an awareness of its strengths as a touristic destination, but tourists are waiting for the good time to visit Lebanon. This image can be enhanced through continues PR campaigns and work side by side with media partners to reflect the nice picture of Lebanon

- **In your opinion, what is the best TV campaign ever made for Lebanon and why?**

I think Smile Lebanon is one of the best TV campaigns ever made for Lebanon, as it serves its task.

- **Do you believe that TV campaigns still have an effective result in attracting tourists? Do you recommend alternative ways to promote Lebanon as a destination brand?**

TV campaigns still have the effective results, briefly for the following reasons:

- Massive reach
- People watch a lot of TV (average 4 hours per day)
- Responsive (you can directly see a reaction from the audience towards any ad either good or bad)
- Emotion: Creative campaigns will stay with the viewer for longer time
- Fame
- Profit generating: high return on investment
- Catalyst for other media: promoting a product leads to promoting another product in the same portfolio. Ex: promoting Lebanon, will promotes the airline, hotels,

- Word of mouth and gossiping: after any promotion on TV, people they tend to criticize and twit on other mediums.

As for the alternative ways to promote Lebanon, I would recommend that the Ministry of Tourism start working on their presence abroad through PR campaigns.

## Appendix II

### Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Carmen Abou Chakra, I am a Graduate student at Notre Dame University – Lebanon and this questionnaire is part of the fulfillment of my Masters Degree. It aims at knowing your opinion towards Lebanon as a tourism destination and at studying the effectiveness of the promotional strategies held by the Ministry of Tourism in Lebanon.

Be assured that confidentiality is guaranteed and that your name is neither required nor will it be used.

Thank you, in advance, for your participation.

### Questions

#### General

1) Gender:     Male     Female

2) Age:     Less than 20     Between 20 – 40

Between 40-60     More than 60

3) Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

4) *(For tourists only)* Is this the first time you visit Lebanon?

Yes

No                      

a. If no, please specify the reasons that brought you back

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b. If yes, please specify why you have chosen Lebanon

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5) *(For tourists only)* Would you recommend to others to come to

Lebanon?  Yes  No

6) *(For tourists only)* Based on what you know, please rank order the most attractive thing about Lebanon is? (One is the most important and nine is least important)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Geographic location
- \_\_\_\_\_ Moderate climate
- \_\_\_\_\_ Historical and natural sites
- \_\_\_\_\_ Nightlife and entertainment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being a mix of cultural and modern aspects of life
- \_\_\_\_\_ People (family and friends)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Business Services
- \_\_\_\_\_ Educational Services
- \_\_\_\_\_ Medical Services

7) *(For tourists only)* Please rank order what you think is the most influential element that negatively affects Tourism in Lebanon? (One is the most negative and four is least negative)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Political and security issues
- \_\_\_\_\_ Economic situation

- \_\_\_\_\_ Social and Environmental situation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of a strong marketing strategy

## **Promotion**

**8) In your opinion, what are the most effective media to promote Lebanon for tourists? (One is the most effective and six is least effective)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Social network
- \_\_\_\_\_ TV and radio ads
- \_\_\_\_\_ Print ads
- \_\_\_\_\_ Festivals and Events
- \_\_\_\_\_ Word of mouth
- \_\_\_\_\_ Conferences and Exhibitions

**9) Have you ever been interested in visiting a country due to its promotions that you have been exposed to?  Yes  No**

a. If yes, did you visit it?  Yes  No

b. Did the country meet your expectations?  Yes  No

**10) What do you think, in terms of importance, the Ministry of tourism should focus on in promoting Lebanon? (One is the more important and five is least important)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Eco-tourism
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cultural tourism



- \_\_\_\_\_ Entertainment and nightlife tourism
- \_\_\_\_\_ Health tourism
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**11) In your opinion, does the government in general and the Ministry of Tourism in specific serve well the promotion of a good image for Lebanon?**     Yes     No     No Answer

**12) In general who, in your opinion, should be more responsible more for promoting Lebanon?**

- Public sector
- Private sector
- Lebanese citizens
- All of the above

**13) How do you best describe today's image of Lebanon?**

- Cultural
- Historical
- Natural
- Religious
- No image

Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**14) If your answer "no image," what do you propose to create as a new touristic image for Lebanon?**

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**15) Have you ever watched promotional TV commercials for Lebanon?**

- Yes       No

**16) Have you been exposed to one or more of the following ads? (You may check more than one answer)**

- 365 Days of Tourism
- Come Back (There is no safer place than Lebanon)
- Discover Lebanon
- It's All in Lebanon
- It's Hard to Leave Lebanon
- It's the Lebanon Blues
- Lebanon a Piece of Heaven
- Smile Lebanon
- Souvenirs Du Liban
- Temperature
- Ups & Downs
- Life Pulse

**17) Based on the previous question, how do you evaluate the image of Lebanon as a tourist destination the way it is portrayed in these TV commercials?**

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral

**18) Did any of these ad(s) create the urge or the interest in you to visit**

**Lebanon?**       Yes       No

**19) Do you think that the image of Lebanon has improved since 2005 till**

**present days?**       Yes       No

**20) Do you think that these TV campaigns contributed to the**

**improvement of the image of Lebanon throughout these years?**

Yes       No

**21) Do you think that the revolutions happening in the nearby countries**

**have affected the image of Lebanon?**       Yes       No

**22) Do you think Lebanon can benefit from these events to boost its**

**tourism sector?**       Yes       No

### **Competition**

**23) Lebanon is one of the best tourist destinations in the Middle East**

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**24) Classify the rank order of the following tourist destinations in the Middle East (One is the more important and five is least important)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Cyprus
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dubai
- \_\_\_\_\_ Egypt
- \_\_\_\_\_ Israel
- \_\_\_\_\_ Jordan
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lebanon
- \_\_\_\_\_ Syria
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turkey

**25) Does Lebanon have the needed promotional elements to stay in the competition and to top-list it?  Yes  No**

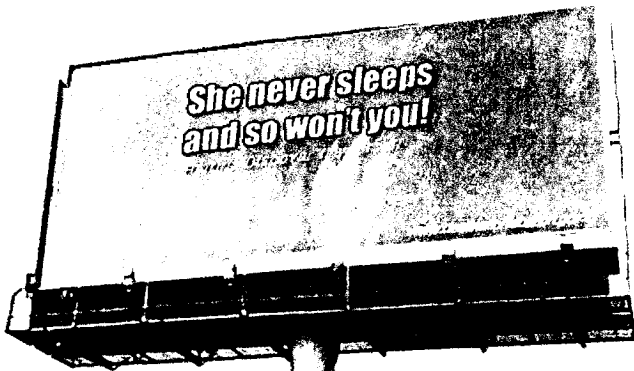
### Appendix III

			
<p>Scene Start:                  Duration:</p> <p>It is a country where</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Scene Start:                  Duration:</p> <p>Love has no limits</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Scene Start:                  Duration:</p> <p>and good times are about</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Scene Start:                  Duration:</p> <p>the people you are with</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
			
<p>Scene Start:                  Duration:</p> <p>a country where family means something</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Scene Start:                  Duration:</p> <p>and bonds are sacred</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Scene Start:                  Duration:</p> <p>It is a country where food is passion</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Scene Start:                  Duration:</p> <p>and adventure can be life changing</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Interesting enough?</p> 			
<p>Scene Start:                  Duration:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		<p>Scene Start:                  Duration:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

From [www.IndependentMusicAdvice.com](http://www.IndependentMusicAdvice.com)

An idea for a TV commercial.

Concept: Selfie (tourists taking pictures in different locations in the country)



(Billboards ideas)